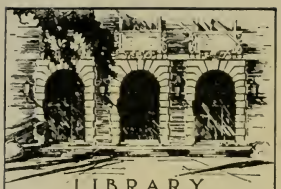
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THE

WILMINGTONS.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"TWO OLD MEN'S TALES," "EMILIA WYNDHAM,"

"MORDAUNT HALL," &c.

Mrs Anne Marsh

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE WILMINGTONS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

In song the spring comes welling
To-day, from out the grass;
And not a hedge but 's telling
Earth's gladness as you pass.
Far up the bright blue sky
The quivering lark is singing;
The thrush, in copses nigh,
Shouts out the joy it's bringing.

W. C. Bennett.

It is a trite observation, and yet one of those which it does not seem useless perpetually to reiterate—how great is the extent of mischief produced by the indulgence of what are commonly called, and what people are more especially inclined to call in themselves—venial faults.

Another observation, perhaps equally trite and equally worthy attention, is recorded by Miss Edgeworth in the proverb prefixed to one of the most incomparable of her incomparable tales, "Barring out," that "The mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's wing."

For true it is, that the weakest and shallowest, and most contemptible among human beings, as regards understanding; and the emptiest, and vainest, and most trifling as regards heart and character; powerless as they may be to effect much good, even under a right direction, may yet prove very mischievous under a wrong one. The moral to be drawn from these observations is still more trite than the observations themselves. I leave it to be inferred by those who honour me in being my readers, and proceed to my tale.

A lovely wood, in the loveliest time of the English year, when May has just merged into June; when the oak is still in its golden or crim-

son spring tints;—the beech yet silken and of a tender green;—the ash putting forth its soft leaves, and the anemone, the blue hyacinth, the lychness, and the white stitchwort in flower; and the fairy groves of bilberries under our feet, are hanging forth their little rose-coloured bells—and as happy a party are sitting together in this wood, and enjoying this delightful time of the year, as ever sallied forth, basket in hand, to gather cowslips in the meadows, or explore the brown horrors of the forest.

They are in their several periods of life, just of the ages when such delights are most exquisitely enjoyed.

Wordsworth, in a poem—the beauty of which has rendered it almost too commonly known to bear a quotation—has celebrated the lovely lights that play round the imagination of the child and the youth, diffusing such a heavenly glow upon the aspect of external nature; and he has compared it to the ineffable brightness of the early dawn of day. Were I gifted with the power of expression which belongs to the poet, I could have been tempted to add something to the beautiful lines—

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
  Upon the growing boy;
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
  He sees it in his joy;
The youth who, daily from the East
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away
And fade into the light of common day.

I would have wished to have added for the consolation of those who, under that fervid and arid noon, look back with fond regret upon the hours of dawn,—that as the light descends and the sun of life sinks slowly to the west, colours and lights more beautiful than all, gather round the closing day.

That the man, as he travels onward, when the heat and turmoil of the noontide hours are at an end, beholds those heavenly visions of the morning with a something more sober, yet more beautiful and tender still,—welcoming, as it were, his return to the regions from whence "trailing clouds of glory," he originally sprang;—once more those finer imaginations which, in the active and stirring business of middle life, had faded

into "common day," return to bless the wearied labourer, and to glorify the evening of his hours before he sinks to his final rest. Whilst the soft dew of evening falls, and the quiet moon rises over the eastern woods, the nightingale sings the requiem of the sun as he disappears amid the gathering curtains of the night.

To return from this effusion to plain story.

The little party assembled in this lovely wood, upon this most enchanting day, consisted of a set of young people still children, and of one aged gentlewoman.

There were some servants in attendance at a little distance, which showed that the party belonged to a class in the higher walks of life; but the ease, gaiety, and simplicity of the little set proved that they had inherited its refinement and escaped all in it that was false or artificial,—had profited by its privileges and escaped its snares so far, at least. And this happy exemption was chiefly owing to the character of the aged lady, to whom her rank and dignity, combined with her character and temper, gave such a powerful influence in this circle of human life.

I am one of those,—and I believe my taste has been shared with some of the finest painters the world has ever possessed,—who have the greatest admiration for the beauty of old age.

The beauty of old age is perhaps more rare than that of any other time of life,—I mean fewer attain to the beauty which adorns the hoary head;—but when it is possessed, it is the most noble or the most lovely, because it is the most truly spiritual and most truly moral of all beauty. Other beauty, though probably in a great degree dependent upon, and certainly in a great degree enhanced by moral qualities, is yet in many respects an accident of forms and colours; but the beauty of old age is the *résumé* of the life of the man. Upon that time-worn countenance the passions and the faults, the virtues and the feelings, the tenderness, love, benevolence—or envy, covetousness, selfishness, and rage, have written their characters in ineffaceable lines; and beautiful it is to see, as we often do see, faces actually plain to ugliness in their youth, gradually expanding into beauty under the influence of goodness, sense, and worth;—the eye brightening into a

serene clearness; the lines of the countenance assuming a heavenly refinement and repose; the whole face glorified with a sweetness and loveliness not of this world. As it is the reverse—and alas! I fear more frequently—when the lovely features that delight us in youth, gradually lose their charm, as the insipidity of vanity, the scowl of disappointment, the dulness of vacuity, the sharp thin lines of vicious excitement, or the grosser ones of sensual enjoyment, gradually obscure what once was.

My old lady belonged to the class I have first spoken of. Whether she had been a beauty or not in her youth I never inquired, but she was indeed beautiful now. She had been a large fair woman once, and of stature rather above the common size; but now her form was bent with age and with sorrow,—for it was plain she had known sorrow. What child of man, who possesses a feeling heart, attains her age without much sorrow? But whilst those traces of frail humanity were observable in both her form and face, the same form and face revealed how well that sorrow had been endured,—how well the fiery strife which

leaves its scars upon life's toil-worn soldier, had been fought. They told how calm had been the courage,—how noble the resignation,—how serene the victory;—what tenderness had softened so much strength,—what anguish endured with so much fortitude;—how energy had been combined with composure,—how much goodness, sympathy, and love had dwelt there.

Her hair was snow-white; her eye clear blue,—that frosty blue of old age, to me so peculiarly beautiful; her skin, so delicately fair, adorned the wrinkles of her face. This, it may be said, is almost the only accidental beauty of colour which remains to old age,—and she possessed it. Her thin withered lips bore an air of indescribable sweetness and kindness; relieved from insipidity by that expression of acuteness—fun—*malice*,—which produces, so combined, in an aged face, something of the same pleasurable effect as when seen in a clever little child.

She was dressed in black silk, with a white satin quilted bonnet and a white cloak. She was sitting upon the raised turf, under a magnificent tree, with her ivory-headed ebony staff lying

beside her, surrounded by the children. These last were extremely busy, sorting, and dividing, and arranging great heaps of flowers which they had been gathering, and which lay prettily intermingled among them. There were five of these children: three little boys, and two little girls.

One of the boys and one of the girls were grandchildren of the Duchess—for that was the old lady's worldly title; two others connected in a certain very remote manner with her; the third a schoolboy friend,—a pale, thin, sallow, large-featured, rather heavy-looking young man, dressed in rather an ungainly manner, in a green coat and pink-striped summer waistcoat, and sat reading under a tree, at some distance from the rest.

We must of course give precedence to rank, even in children, and so I have the pleasure to introduce you first to Lord George Tempest, a boy about ten or eleven years old, and as handsome a young creature as you have often seen. He was a regular beauty of the Norman race, as it is the affectation of the times to say. A regular beauty among our beautiful aristocracy. He had a

right to be called. Features at once manly and delicate,—eyes of the darkest blue, almost black in their cloudy splendour,—hair curling like the bells of the hyacinth, and of the most sunny golden brown; with a slender figure, formed for elegance and action at once, and promising to be just so much above the common height as to be distinguished, without being too tall;—lips like cherries, and the face full of fun, spirit, and good humour—such was this dear young Lord George.

He was an imaginative being, though a mischievous petulant schoolboy, and, consequently, he already fancied himself in love; and it was with his little cousin Flavia, who sat by his side almost buried in flowers. She was an active little creature, and had gathered a huge nosegay by her own exertions, which now lay upon one side of her; whilst another, twice as big, was upon the other, gathered by her indefatigable adorer—her knight, her squire, her slave—Lord George.

They were very busy together, for she was an orderly little thing, though full of fancy, as she was full of goodness and feeling; and she was

sorting and arranging the confused heap of treasures that lay around her, and so absorbed, that she seemed as if she could think of nothing but her flowers.

A little way from her, but upon the same side of the circle, we come to Harry. He is a plain, rather heavy-looking boy—certainly not cast in an aristocratic mould; his complexion is sunburned, his features coarsely cut; his motions too are usually more awkward, and his speech more slow and confused, than they were need to be, for he is excessively, painfully shy. He is, however, at present, completely engaged in what he is about; and, with gravity worthy of a more important occasion, is arranging, re-arranging, tying up and untying, a nosegay of the flowers he has collected,—endeavouring to please his own eye by his arrangement; but in vain. Poor Harry Wilmington, even so early, experiences what it is to be one of those hapless beings, who possess a taste beyond their powers of execution, and therefore is destined to be dissatisfied with himself and with all his performances. Thence his self-distrust—his hesitation—his awkwardness—his painful sense

of timidity and shyness, when in the company of those he admires—admires with all the fervour of a most sensitive disposition, and most vivid perception of the excellent and the beautiful in all things.

Opposite to Harry, and at a very short distance from the Duchess, whom she perfectly adores, sits Caroline. A fine brown gipsy girl, larger and stronger-looking than the rest, with nut-brown clear eyes, full of strength and intelligence,—dark-brown hair cut short in a crop,—and a cheek finely proportioned, but colourless as that of a Spaniard. She is not making nosegays; she has got some grasses and a book, and is studying to make them out; assisted by a thin, delicate-looking fair-haired boy, with complexion transparent as the finest porcelain; soft pink colour in his cheeks; sweet, intelligent blue eyes, which are both tender and melancholy; and a mouth that one would hardly think could belong to a boy,—so gentle, so almost plaintive is its expression. He is called Albert Selwyn by the others, being the schoolboy acquaintance of Harry, who, as sometimes happens, is always Harry in and out of school. Now, we

must know who these children are, and their connexion with each other.

Lord George is the Duchess's grandson, descended from her eldest daughter, now a widow, her husband, the Earl of Sandown, having been sometime dead, leaving this boy with a very slender younger son's portion. His elder brother, who has inherited the estates, being much older, is now abroad, travelling with his tutor; and as he probably will appear no more in this history, we may as well dispose of him at once.

He married abroad, and spent most of his time afterwards there, to the injury of the rightful pretensions of his fair countrywomen "on the market," in the first place,—and of his tenants, dependants, and the country under whose laws and protection he inherited and held his property in the second. The mother of Lord George had a plentiful jointure, and led a life of the great world; spending every farthing she possessed, and indeed rather more, upon herself and her son. In consequence, he had now, and continued to have for some years, much more money to spend than was at all good for him; but his tender

mother, who perfectly adored him, was ever lamenting his miserably slender inheritance, and resolved that, at least while she lived, he should not know what privation was. She therefore spared no expense to secure for him luxuries and enjoyments that heirs of even very large fortunes are often denied. So that handsome, good-hearted, lively Lord George is in danger of being spoiled, I am afraid; and so thinks his good grandmother, and remonstrates, and even lectures, and strives with all her might to undo the evil effects of such a system,—with what success we shall presently see.

Flavia is the daughter of the Duchess's third daughter, and is dear and precious above all things to the good grandmother's heart; for she has lived very much with her. The mother had married a Welsh squire, that is to say, a Welshman with a good deal of landed property in Wales; but he was not like most Welsh squires—a man of high family,—his father, or perhaps himself, I forget which, had considerably added to a small estate by successful trade; so that when the Lady Margaret married him it was regarded as rather

a derogation to her high dignity,—and, though she had fallen in love with the young man, or his plentiful fortune—so she thought herself. However, he died soon, and left her with this one little girl, heiress to all his wealth. But the mother hated trouble and loved dissipation, and the care and attention necessary to educate a little solitary child under such circumstances was quite beyond her; so the task had chiefly fallen upon the good Duchess, who was one of those who stood by, ready to step in and atone for the deficiencies of others. She had spared no care or exertion to rear this little plant properly; and such care and exertion always results in making a child doubly dear; but Flavia is indeed a very nice little thing, gay, innocent, affectionate, simple-hearted,—a laughing, loving child,—yet full of character, —with something determined, which had been doggedness in her mother, softened by her own natural pliancy and softness. Lord George loved her dearly—both as cousin and as a young imaginative boy. He thought her quite an angel, and his mother encouraged the feeling by every means in her power; whilst the good grandmother,

though too wary and too well-principled to encourage this nascent attachment, or influence the affections of either in any way, could not help feeling a certain complacency when she saw them thus sitting busily occupied together, apparently forgetting the existence of every one in the world but themselves.

Harry was the son of Mr. Wilmington, the rich city merchant—the prosperous, the *millionnaire* Mr. Wilmington; and also, it may be added, the very handsome and brilliant Mr. Wilmington; the idol and the star among a very numerous and wealthy, if not a very tip-top circle. He had married a daughter of a distant relation of the Welsh squire; and thus was, in a very remote degree, connected with the Duchess,—a connection, however slight, in which he took the greatest pride. Such a gossamer thread of union would, however, in all probability, have long ago vanished from all recollection upon the one side, had not the memory of it been kept up by the accident of Flavia L—— and Caroline Wilmington being educated at the same school.

Mrs. Wilmington had been, almost from the

time of her marriage, in a declining state of health, —a circumstance which left her gay husband to pursue his objects, either of business or pleasure, very much alone. A thing to be regretted, —for his wife, who was sensible and serious, a woman of simple tastes and of a quiet and reserved disposition, might have acted as a very useful check upon his rash, sanguine temperament, —and as a mute censor upon that unbounded love of expense and display, in which his plentiful fortune allowed him to indulge almost without limit.

His children, luckily for them, had, however, been left almost entirely to the guidance of their mother. Of Caroline, the gay father was proud and fond. She was a clever, spirited, handsome little thing, always ready with a lively answer to many a sportive attack, and with spirits equal to any of the schemes of pleasure he might have in view for her. As a little child, she had been seldom sick, and never cross.

Harry was none of these things. As a child, he had been ugly, tender-spirited, of feeble health, and consequently rather fretful temper. As he

grew older, the ill health and the fretfulness had disappeared; but the effects of the constant checks he had received from his too thoughtless father remained, and, acting upon a most sensitive disposition, and a most simple, humble, and affectionate heart, had produced all that shyness, timidity, and self-distrust which obscured so many latent good qualities.

Selwyn was the orphan son of a merchant, belonging to that mercantile aristocracy of honourable, long-descended, commercial houses which fill so high a place in our mixed society. He was heir to a very large fortune, and there was another in expectation. His mother had been sister to that Mr. Craiglethorpe, who, it was reported, was now making his millions in India, though he had left England somewhat late in life.

It was Mr. Craiglethorpe's only brother, Thomas, who sat under the tree reading.

Selwyn was being educated at the same school with Harry and Lord George, with the former of whom he had contracted a close intimacy, which was fast ripening into tender friendship. These

two sensitive and feeling, and, we may add, suffering hearts, grew together; for though Selwyn had not that bashfulness, shyness, and awkwardness which distressed Harry,—being a remarkably gentlemanlike boy, though silent and quiet,—yet the extreme delicacy of his health ill-fitted him for the strifes and difficulties of a large school; and his sufferings would have been great, if it had not been for the support and assistance of Harry, who, with all his social timidity, was physically and morally brave as a lion, and, when roused, courageous as a hero. He had fought many a hard battle in defence of his friend; and had done more, for he had defied the general ridicule by the tender, almost womanly attentions which he paid to the wants and comforts of the delicate and suffering boy.

This friendship had become quite a proverb in the family; and wishing to please Harry Wilmington, the good Duchess had invited Selwyn to join this little party, which she had assembled round her.

Flavia and Caroline were returned for the holidays from Mrs. Steelcollar's establishment;—

a highly fashionable seminary, to which Caroline had been sent much against the wishes of her mother, and Flavia equally against the opinion of her grandmother. But the resolution of Mr. Wilmington, most anxious for his daughter's progress in all those external accomplishments which in his opinion her mother prized too lightly, and of the worldly-minded Lady Margaret, had prevailed in both cases; and these young people had been brought more closely together, considering the slenderness of their connection, and the different circles of society in which they seemed destined to move, than would have otherwise been the case.

The two girls, though Caroline was some five years the senior in age, had become greatly attached to each other; and Flavia had made it her first petition upon her return home, that Caroline might be invited with her brother Harry, of whom she was so very fond, to spend the first weeks of the summer holidays at Castle Delaval.

Harry had seen Flavia several times before, when she had been allowed to come home for a day with Miss Wilmington; for, as her mother had

the honour to be, though distantly, allied to her father's family, in spite of Mr. Wilmington's city connections, Lady Margaret could not, in decency, refuse Flavia's earnest entreaties to be allowed to visit her friend.

Harry was no brilliant precocious boy, like Lord George, and he never ventured upon those flattering speeches to the pretty little girl of which the other was so lavish: he only displayed the more fervent admiration with which his boyish heart was filled,—by eyes fixed upon her in silent reverential tenderness, as upon some being belonging to a sphere quite beyond his own; and by his very timid attempts at rendering her any little service, for which the opportunity might occur. Whilst unluckily, poor fellow, the very sensibility of his heart, acted, as it too often does, on one so sensitive, in an adverse manner; producing a more than usual awkwardness in his motions and hesitation in his voice whenever he addressed her. Caroline was vexed to see her darling brother appear to so little advantage, but was too young to understand the nature of such feelings; and her animated remonstrances and evident

mortification upon such occasions, did not tend to mend the matter. The good old Duchess, who had penetration enough to discover the sterling qualities possessed by the boy under this somewhat homely outside, succeeded, however, better in her endeavours to encourage him. She could in secret have wished, perhaps, that her darling and brilliant grandson could have united with his other engaging qualities, something of the modesty, the gentleness, and the unaffected simplicity of Harry's manner; but this would have been, indeed, to combine contradictions, and she knew the thing was next to impossible. Yet she could not help every now and then falling into the mistake of holding up to Lord George something in the light of an example—the very boy he looked down upon, as infinitely his inferior in every respect. This did Harry no good service in the eyes of the other: he looked upon any proofs of this preference above himself as a most crying injustice; and was not so much inclined to be jealous of Harry—a feeling he would have thought infinitely beneath him—as to regard him with a certain dislike, as the cause of a partiality which he thought

so injurious to his own claims. With this feeling was mingled a little schoolboy jealousy of his admiration of Flavia, which, though Harry, in his pride and delicacy, endeavoured to conceal, he was too artless not to betray unconsciously upon almost every occasion.

Lord George had, however, little cause to envy Harry the place he held in the little lady's favour; her preference for himself was as undisguised as were all the other innocent emotions of her little honest heart.

"Well, Harry," said the Duchess, after a long silence, during which she had been observing him, "you have taken infinite pains with that nosegay of yours; you have tied and untied it twenty times, I think. I have been watching your attempts, and admiring your patience; and now it is at last done, it looks extremely pretty; but you keep holding it in your hand. Do you mean it only for yourself, after all?"

"Oh, no," stammered Harry; "only—I don't know—I don't feel sure."

"What, don't you know? what don't you feel sure of?"

"Whether she will think it, after all, worth having."

"She? who?"

"Miss Flavia."

"Yes," said the good-natured old lady; "I am sure she will, if you mean it for her; and think it as pretty as I do. Here, Flavia, my dear."

But Flavia heard not. She and Lord George were very much too busy to listen to anything but their own rapid and animated prattle.

"Come hither, Flavia." But Flavia did not even turn her head.

Harry looked at them, and then at his nosegay, and then at the Duchess.

"Thank you, ma'am; but perhaps she wouldn't like it."

"Why not? Any one must like such a beautiful assemblage of flowers; and you have taken such pains with it, too. Flavia, my dear,"—raising her voice a little—"do you not hear me? Look what a beautiful nosegay of flowers Harry Wilmington has made for you!"

"For me, is it? oh, what a beauty! Come and

sit here, Harry," said the little girl, making room for him. "Look, George, what a beauty!"

"Do you call that a beauty? It's tied together as if it were going to be sold by the bunch in Covent-Garden market. Do you call that a nosegay?—here, hand it over to me, Flavia, and let me look at it."

She gave it him: he took it, and surveyed it scornfully.

"Well, to be sure, here is a taste!"

Harry's countenance fell; his spirits were unfortunately so tender, as to be daunted on some things by the merest trifles. The Duchess watched him with interest, and said laughingly, in order to encourage him,

"I am afraid, dear George, you are a sad conceited fellow, and fancy nobody can do anything well but yourself; even to the tying-up of a nosegay he would fain be considered incomparable," said she, turning to Harry. "I hope this ambition may extend to objects of more importance. In the meantime, my dear, you must not trouble yourself with the fancies of little girls," she added, seeing Flavia drop the nosegay upon the grass by

her side, with an air of indifference. "At that little girl's age, we have no idea of having a taste or opinion different from those we love."

The last sentence was not exactly adapted to console the proud and feeling boy. He rose from the ground, and retreating, walked quietly away through the bushes by himself.

And then he watched the trees playing in the soft summer wind, and the white blossoms of the mountain-ash bowing and rising again, and filling the air with sweetness, whilst the birds were whistling and chirping and singing, and nature all so harmoniously beautiful. He walked on, musing, and heard the laughter and the talk going on behind him, and felt how lonely he was, and how different from other people; and then a deep sense of discouragement laid hold of him. He was nothing, and should be nothing. No one on earth seemed to care for him, but his mother and Caroline; and his mother was far away, and Caroline seemed absorbed by Selwyn. What was he now to any of them? but, indeed, what was there in him that he should?

Presently he heard the bustle as the company

departed from the place they had been occupying; and gradually the hum of voices, broken by the merry and exhilarating laugh, died away.

Then Harry returned to the spot which they had quitted, and there he found his nosegay, left neglected upon the ground. He was far from resenting this neglect as a piece of injustice, as Lord George would have done infallibly in his place; but he felt it acutely, and in a manner beyond his years; he, however, preserved his youthful dignity and composure, walked quietly to the place, took it up, and, going to the side of a brook which ran sparkling and gurgling through the hazel-bushes hard by, he deliberately dropped it in, and watched it, vexed and tossed by the whirling stream, till it disappeared. Then he returned to the house in apparent tranquillity, but more sore of heart, more depressed in spirits, by such a trifle, than one could have thought possible.

CHAPTER II.

Hold not my passion's offering poor;
Trust in a true heart's worth—
Ay, more than all the tinsel shows
That dazzle the dull earth.

W. C. Bennett.

No doubt this visit, in spite of the kind encouragement of the Duchess, was upon the whole unfavourable to the development of this sensitive character.

In company with Lord George, so brilliant, handsome, high-spirited, and arrogant,—or rather, perhaps, I should use the French word, *avantageux*,—for Lord George, though too good-natured and too easy in his temper strictly to merit the term arrogant, had certainly that high sense of his

own advantages which often exercises a very depressing effect upon the spirits of others—in his presence, the only other boy being Selwyn, whose gentleness, elegance, ease and refinement of manner forbad him appearing in unfavourable contrast with any one,—Henry felt more than ever the depressing sense of his own defects and disadvantages.

The ambition of pleasing seemed in danger of being lost with the hope of succeeding. He was too gentle-tempered to become morose, too highly minded to be quarrelsome,—but, dissatisfied with himself, and ill at ease, he moped about, leaving the others to their enjoyments. Lord George and Flavia seemed ready enough to make themselves happy, without paying the least regard to him in any way,—but not so his sister and Selwyn.

The children were the rest of that day busy building a fairy's bower; and having constructed a pretty sylvan cave, with twisted living branches and boughs of trees, they were busy ornamenting it with the flowers they had been collecting. Lord George had already installed Flavia as

Queen of the Fairies, and was decking a throne for her with the nosegays they had tied up. The little girl was busy and pleased; Caroline and Selwyn were ornamenting the walls of the bower; they were all laughing and talking, and all very happy. Suddenly Caroline stopped, turned round, looked at Selwyn, and said,—

"Where's Harry?"

"Where is he?" responded Selwyn. "He came out with us. What a pity, Caroline, that he is so dull and melancholy!"

"He is always quiet at home, and sometimes melancholy; yet in general Harry is a happy boy, though so grave; but he grows quite gloomy here. I wonder what is become of him?"

"Shall we go and look for him?" said Selwyn.

"No, you stay here, and let me go alone."

She took up her hat, which lay by her upon the ground, tied it over her dark hair, and then looking, as Selwyn thought, like the most beautiful gypsy he had ever seen painted, left the bower in search of her brother.

It was a wild copsy-tangled wood, and now the glorious month of June; the blue hyacinths

enamelled the ground beneath like a pavement of lapis-lazuli, varied by patches of the lovely white anemone. The clear, bright sun penetrated the yellow and red transparent leaves of the oaks, the beeches waved their silken tendrils in the soft wind, and the dark, shining hollies sparkled in the light, whilst the birds sang in the branches of the hornbeam and the hazel. It was the loveliest of summer days. The young heart of the girl swelled with a lofty pleasure as she gazed around, and imbibed, as it were, the genius of the woods, and lifted her dark, serious, earnest eye to the heavens, and thought of that Being whom her mother had from earliest infancy directed her to seek in all things; and the grandeur, and the beauty, and the love—His grandeur, His beauty, His love—seemed flowing in a rich stream of goodness above, around, beneath her. And her heart, so good, so earnest, so deeply serious, swelled responsive to it; and as she threaded those green sylvan labyrinths it gushed to words in an extemporary hymn of praise. These were Caroline's most fervid, most delightful moments. She was one of those who from

their very infancy have imbibed that higher life which lifts the creature, as it were, above the cares and the vanities, without unfitting it for the affections and the duties, of this life. There had been from a child,—if the word will not appear misapplied, but I can find no other,—something of the sublime about her.

Caroline had been the most generous, the most self-devoted, the most self-denying among children; the most seriously indefatigable at her studies, because she looked upon them as duties; the most faithful to truth; the most strictly honest, temperate, and serene of little girls; and the most scrupulous in the performance of her childish offices of devotion. Added to all this, she was most warmly affectionate in her feelings, both to her father, her mother, and, above all, to her brother. She loved her father for his good nature and indulgence, with all that overflowing gratitude, even for small kindnesses, of which characters like hers are so fully capable. She loved her mother with a reverence approaching to awe, looking up to her as to some superior being, whose wisdom and virtue inspired her with an esteem beyond

words; her brother, with a mixture of tenderness, admiration, and compassion. With sympathies so strong for all that was righteous and good; with a sound sense such as that which she possessed, she had early discerned and almost worshipped the dawning virtues discoverable even from his earliest childhood in the little boy, who was four or five years younger than herself. Gifted with that discernment into character which some children so strangely display, she understood him perfectly. She estimated, if no one else could, how hard it must be for him to adhere, unflinchingly as he did, to his truthfulness, his principles, his high sense of what was right, in spite of the bashful shyness which made every moral effort so painful and so difficult. She understood the deep sensibility of his feelings, which neither father nor mother saw; she discerned the burning sense of shame with which he received his mother's reproofs—reproofs that Caroline could often perceive were founded upon a misconception of his motives and intentions; or the painful sense of embarrassment with which he endured his gay father's sarcasms upon his manners and appearance. She could see how

cruelly he was wounded by injustice or unkindness, and could appreciate the temper and the fortitude with which he endured what was to him a source of such exquisite pain. She loved him dearly as her only brother; she loved him with enthusiasm, as, in her opinion, the most excellent of human creatures; she loved him with the fondest tenderness, as to her an object of the gentlest sympathy and compassion. She loved him as one from whom she felt she should receive, were it needed, all that support which woman seeks in man; and she loved him as the being, in some respects almost childishly, dependant upon herself for tenderness and happiness.

And it was under the influence of this feeling, blended—of the mother, the elder sister, and the guardian angel, the monitor and the comforter—that she now, soothed by the whispering spirit of the woods, wandered along looking for him.

She came to a green alley cut where a double line of towering elm trees made a lofty verdant arch, which arch the sky only suffered the rays of the sun to flicker through upon the grass. He

was slowly walking there with his back turned towards her.

She went up to him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder before he perceived her,—for he was deep in thought, his head dropped upon his breast, and looking very downcast. But he turned round, and a brightness spread over his face as he looked at her. He had been feeling, in his melancholy, as if quite alone—as if nobody cared for him—that dark phantom which haunts the young in their desponding hours—and here was that dear, dear sister close at hand, looking at him with the affectionate, anxious look which comforted him when he was sad or sorry.

"My dear Harry, why will you run away from all the rest?" she began in a tone of gentle remonstrance; "Do you know, it is not very wise to indulge these moping humours, and I am sure it can't be very pleasant. Come," putting her hand under his chin, and endeavouring to turn his face, which he had averted, towards her, "confess you are sulky about something or another, and yet you would give the world to have done with it, and be among us again. Only you feel as if there

was something grand in such a mood, and it is so awkward to descend from one's altitude. Do tell me, dear Harry, what's the matter with you?"

"It's only the old thing, that I am a great fool to care."

"Yes, that I'll be bound you are. But what do you care about? What has vexed you?"

"Oh, Caroline, don't ask me! I'm ashamed of myself. I think there never was such a stupid ass as I am."

"Oh, that's quite an old story, Harry—of course you are;—but that's not the reason you look so disconsolate; because, if it is, I wish you'd take my word for it, and not your own, and then you would never call yourself ass again."

He smiled.

"Ah! that's right—it's going away. Come, come along; we've got all our flowers out; we put them in water yesterday, and you cannot think how pretty the bower is. Lord George is making such a beautiful throne for Flavia, and the child is in extasies. Where's your nosegay that you made yesterday?"

"She didn't care for it;—she would'nt even

look at it. Lord George persuaded her that it was not worth having—and no more it was—so I threw it away."

"I am sorry you did that; you would have been glad to have had it when there was a use for it; but it doesn't much signify."

"Oh, no," and he turned away.

"But it does signify to him, I see," said Caroline to herself. "That overbearing Lord George! Why was not Harry's nosegay as good as his own, I wonder—because, it was *his*—I see that. But Harry shall have some flowers to give Flavia, that *he* can't get. Come, Harry," speaking aloud again, "come along, and never mind your slighted nosegay. You shall have one the day after to-morrow, that Lord George himself shall envy; and have the pleasure of presenting it to the fairy queen, who is to be crowned upon that day. Only, dear, dear brother," laying her hand kindly upon his shoulder, and stooping down too, for she was a good deal taller than he was—"dear brother, I wish I could persuade you to be true to yourself; and to resist these low melancholy feelings which indeed, indeed, only expose you to the slights and inso-

lence of others, and which I am much afraid—much afraid may end by permanently weakening your character, Harry."

"I feel so miserably awkward; so wretchedly shy."

"Aye, that is it, and this will grow upon you, my dear boy; but don't let it grow upon you—resist it—vanquish it. Come, now to begin, do come and work at the arbour, and never mind that foolish, conceited Lord George: he thinks himself worth ten of you, and you are foolish enough to let him make you almost think so yourself, when he is not fit—no not to hold the candle to you. I can't bear to see it, Harry—I cannot indeed—your spirit has been cowed as a child, I know. They did not quite understand you. It was bad; but it little matters, so you do but understand *yourself* now, and fight with this low-spirited feeling of yours. Indeed you can do it if you will but try. If you will but learn these precious words, 'Don't care.'"

"'Don't care' shipwrecked Harry upon the coast of Africa," said her brother, looking up at her and smiling.

"I don't know how that might be," answering the smile with a look of the tenderest affection; "but *do* care, shipwrecks many a precious vessel upon the shoals of society. Young as I am, I have found out that," she said, gaily. "Come along."

By that post Caroline wrote to her father:—

"Dear Papa,

"We are all very happy here, for the Duchess is excessively good-natured; and this is the loveliest place you can conceive. Such immense woods! Woods are so different from shrubberies; and they are so unimaginably beautiful; and quite full of wild flowers and all manner of lovely trees; and such abundance of birds! for the Duchess does not allow the birds to be shot; so her woods are a land of refuge for all 'the feathered choir;' and it's lovely early in the morning to see and hear them so happy and so busy. We have found loads of nests, and I have got a collection of eggs,—some very curious,—and a great many new flowers for mamma's herbal. The Duchess is a delightful old lady; not the least grand or proud, as I thought all Duchesses were,

but such a reverend, gentle person, and so gravely dressed! I was quite surprised; I expected her to be so fine;—but she is not one-half so fine as Mrs. Emerson's mother, or Mrs. Emerson herself, and more in mamma's taste about these things, which I think you will be glad to know. And there is such a set of ancient, grey-haired servants; —I wish we had grey-haired servants; you can't think how respectable and nice it looks,—as if they were old friends; and the Duchess's own maid is quite an old woman, and stoops actually, and is so plainly dressed! Flavia is prettier than ever; but I do not see so much of her as at school, because she is quite taken up with her cousin Lord George, who is here, of course, and I don't like him much. He's good-natured enough, but he's arrogant, and seems to think himself too good for his company. I don't care the least bit in the world for this, neither does Selwyn. We both know very well we are not born to be lords and ladies; and if they don't care for us we're both very like the miller,—(but the good Duchess is not a bit arrogant); but it vexes me sometimes for Henry; because Henry, though

he has a noble spirit within, yet you know he is so shy and distrustful of himself; and Lord George takes advantage of his humility and his modesty, and *dashes* him. He seems a good-natured boy in the main, in spite of his faults, but he has taken a sort of spite, I think, to Henry. It's about Flavia, I think;—only that would be too foolish, for Flavia evidently does not care the least in the world for Henry, and is never happy without Lord George. However, now I come to the end of my letter, and what I want you, dearest papa, to do. There's been something about a nosegay,—and I think Lord George was ill-natured and insolent, and despised Henry, because his nosegay was not so handsome as *his;* and I won't teaze you with particulars, but what I want is, a very beautiful nosegay to be sent to Henry out of our hot-houses—they have no hot-houses, except for grapes, here;—something that Lord George could not sneer at, and that Henry might have the pleasure of giving to Flavia, and that Flavia would like to have. I dare say my feelings are very foolish, and perhaps almost wrong about all this; but I cannot help wishing

it very much; and if you would do me the great favour to send Henry a splendid nosegay of hot-house flowers,—or some very fine heaths would do, but I'm not sure if they are not over,—you would, dear papa, oblige very much indeed,

"Your affectionate daughter,

"CAROLINE.

"There's going to be a sort of Fairy Queen Feast the day after to-morrow. Please send the flowers to be here that day morning early. Dear love to mamma."

The answer:—

"My dear little charmer of a Caroline,

"Thank you for your long letter. I am glad you are happy, and that the Duchess is so kind to you. By your account, that Lord George seems an insolent jackanapes, as most of the Nobs who have fallen under my observation are. I'm sorry Harry is such a lout. By your letter, I guess he is rather more so at Castle Delaval than even at home, where he's more awkward a good deal than enough. However, he's my son, and not to be borne down by anybody, and you were quite right, and acted like the dear, sensible,

spirited girl you are, to write to me; and to-morrow Harry will receive such a bouquet as I think few Lords or Dukes either, can present to the fairest Fairy Queen in the land. I went through our own houses; but not content with that, I have been to three or four in the King's Road, and I have taken the trouble myself to select the very rarest and choicest things that were to be had; and my boy shall have a nosegay that royalty itself might be proud to receive;—and then your Lord George may scoff as he will, and be ready to bite his fingers off for mere envy. But tell Harry, with my love, that I sent him to school to learn to make his own way; and not to look mealy-faced, and as if he was frightened out of his seven senses when he comes across strangers.

"My darling Carry's loving father to command, you little witch,

"EDWARD WILMINGTON."

Proud was the young girl—far too young, and far too confiding to distinguish all that might have been distinguished in this letter, and grateful beyond measure to the indulgent father who had

so generously and munificently complied with this request.

Upon the appointed morning a box arrived, directed to Henry Wilmington, Esq.; and Caroline had the extreme delight of seeing her brother's surprise and pleasure when he opened it and beheld an enormous bouquet, composed of the most expensive and lovely flowers that it was possible to gather together. The rarest orchidaceous plants, in all their fantastic variety of forms and most dazzling colours, the rarest and finest geraniums, camellias, roses, ixias, gladiolus—everything that was most rich and beautiful. The whole was tied together by a silver ribbon, and surrounded by a paper border, cut and painted, and gilt and ornamented like a French fan. Caroline thought the flowers needed little this addition, which, to her taste, rather diminished than enhanced the extreme beauty of the nosegay; and so might Harry have thought, had he not been far too much pleased to be critical. Selwyn was summoned to admire the flowers and rejoice in their possession; and the Fairy Queen being already seated upon her throne, the three came down

together, Harry carrying his present, with an air of bashful pride, the two others following.

Caroline had insisted upon Harry presenting his nosegay himself—and he consented; but when he entered the arbour, his usual shyness overpowered him, as he saw the Duchess sitting there; and going up to Flavia, who, crowned with a little chaplet of roses, her white frock looped up with flowers, was already placed upon her verdant chair, he pushed rather than presented the flowers to her, saying,

"My father sent me that, and it's for you," coloured high, and retreated.

But the rapture of the little creature restored him to himself.

"Oh, George! oh, grandmamma! what beautiful, beautiful—curious, curious flowers! Oh, Harry, how very, very kind!" stepping off her seat, and lugging the great nosegay to where the Duchess sat; "what beautiful, curious flowers! See, here's a butterfly; you may touch it. Ha, ha, ha! it isn't alive—it's a real flower—it can't fly away: pretty butterfly! See, here's a beetle; look at this monstrous thing. Oh! dear, but

there's a real bee in that rose; what a monstrous rose, and how excessively lovely!" And she clapped her hands, and kept walking round and round her grandmamma, upon whose lap she had laid the flowers.

The Duchess praised and admired; Caroline and Selwyn stood by and smiled, and Harry was in a state of mingled embarrassment, and pleasure; Lord George stood aloof, proud, angry, jealous, and gloomy.

Flavia soon took her nosegay again in both hands, and saying, "Now, I am to sit and hold it. Sha'n't I look like a real queen, Harry? Caroline, help me to get up again."—returned to where her elevated seat was placed. "George! what's the matter with you, George?" said she, suddenly struck with the gloomy expression of his face; "what's the matter? Do come and look at this loveliest nosegay, which Harry has given me."

"I don't want to look at the nosegay; what do I care for nosegays?" said he, in a low voice and irritated tone, as she went up to him; "but I suppose you do—and more, perhaps, than for anything else in the world. I suppose you'll love

Master Harry best now. I can't get you such nosegays."

She cast up her pretty eyes to his,—

"Oh! George; as if that would make any difference."

And, more anxious to satisfy the feelings of her cousin, than to show her gratitude for the pains that had been taken to please her, she was soon too much occupied with him to cast a thought or a look upon the giver.

Lord George visibly triumphed; and the three were vexed and disappointed—inclined to be angry at the little ungrateful one—but they ought to have loved her better, because her love was not to be bought.

CHAPTER III.

Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe
Our hermit spirits dwell, and range apart;
Our eyes see all around in gloom or glow—
Hues of their own, fresh borrow'd from the heart.
T. E. Reade—*Revelations of Life.*

But now Caroline was summoned away, and Selwyn returned to his friends, and Harry remained at Castle Delaval for a week alone. This was a terrible time to him.

Left alone with Lord George and Flavia, exposed to the rude schoolboy jests and rebuffs of the one, and wounded by the careless indifference of the other, in vain he endeavoured to practise the philosophy which his sister had recommended. His spirits sank lower and lower every day; and

his consciousness of this, his sense of his own infirmity, his secret vexation at his own want of spirit, excited that self-dissatisfaction which makes one feel as if the scorns and neglects he meets with are but his due. He was more solitary and unsociable than ever; indeed the other two left him mostly to himself. They were busily engaged in their own schemes, and took little notice of him, except that Lord George could less than ever resist the temptation of trying his wit upon so tempting a butt; for Harry could seldom rally his spirits sufficiently to parry his sarcasms with a ready answer, and usually took refuge in silence. Sometimes Flavia would seem to take little pleasure in these exhibitions of her cousin's wit; at others she could not help laughing, George was so droll. And oh, how bitter was that little childish laugh to Harry's feelings! At such times the somewhat stolid equanimity which he strove to maintain was overset; the colour would rush to his cheek; the tear be scarcely by all his efforts kept from mounting to his eye, and he would rush hastily away. The loud exulting laugh of Lord George would follow him, ringing odiously in his ears. Then

would he bury himself in the thickest of the copse, and, hidden from every eye, would sit there moping for hours.

The Duchess meanwhile saw that the boy suffered, and it vexed her much. She had early, as I have said, discovered under this unpromising outside how many valuable qualities lay concealed. She endeavoured to cheer him by the kindest attentions; and the few hours in each day that he passed with her were comparatively happy. But in vain did she try to recommend him to her grandchildren, and vainly did she point out the attentions which, in their own house, common politeness demanded. Children are usually insensible to every conventional claim. Lord George unscrupulously resisted her wishes, declaring Harry to be the most intolerable bore he ever met with in his life; and saying openly that he was not going to have the last week of his holidays spoiled for him.

Flavia seemed to think it a terrible piece of injustice that George's holidays should be spoiled for any creature upon earth; and fully entered into his view of the intolerable hardship it would be

for him to be dancing attendance upon that stupid mope of a Harry Wilmington, instead of carrying out all the thousand pleasant schemes in which he was engaged with her,—schemes in which the little girl was his most docile and obedient slave, doing exactly what he bade her, however inconvenient, fatiguing, or painful to herself, with the utmost facility. Lord George was, in fact, four or five years her senior; and though he admired and loved her beyond measure, in his way, it was in *his* way, and in the way of many others older than himself; that is to say, with much less regard to her happiness than to his own.

Sometimes when she was quite fagged and worn out with being his horse, or his lion, or his hare, or whatever his fancy might please her to be, she would complain very gently, and ask him when he would have done play, for she was so hot, she hoped he would not be very long; and he would ans wer:

"Oh, you dear little thing, don't pretend to be tired. You can't be tired. I'm not the least tired in the world. Come, tally-ho! off with you, or I shall cut you up where you stand."

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And then Harry, who frequently stood by a silent spectator of these scenes, would feel his heart glowing with indignation. But he dared not interfere,—first, because he was sure there would be a loud brawl if he did, and that would offend the kind Duchess; and, secondly, that he was sure if he ever hinted at blame to Lord George, Flavia would instantly and warmly take his part, and be more hot and angry than even he could be.

He used to content himself with bringing her strawberries or water in a China cup, when she stood unharnessed in her stable under the laburnum trees, after a long run in George's cabriolet; and Lord George would allow this, and call him "Tom the tiger," or "Charles Dickens's fat boy," or "Tony Lumpkin,"—which insults, though they could not drive Harry to abandon his labours of love, effectually took all the sweetness out of them.

"Oh! dear, dear George, don't ask me to run again; I am so very, very tired," remonstrated the poor little pony; as many another poor little pony might do, if it had tongue to speak and tearful eyes to add force to the appeal.

"Well, now, Flavia, just when I've finished this new harness—only look, how I've contrived it; and there's a real little saddle for your back, just like Grey Gilbert's harness."

"But I don't like to wear a saddle—a real saddle upon my back," said the little girl, looking disgusted and half-terrified; "I'm not a real pony."

"Nonsense! You ought to make yourself as like a pony as you can; or what's the use of my playing at horse-and-carriage with you at all? You're growing quite ill-natured, Flavia; I can't think what's come to you: but I'm not going to put up with your childish whims. You engaged to come out and play at pony; and here I've been all this morning making this saddle: so come, gee whup!—stand still—let me put your harness on, or you'll have a taste of my whip, little Colonel; see if you don't."

"No—no, George," with a look of terror; "pray don't."

A child of that age has a horror indescribable at the idea of being touched by the whip.

"Then do as you are bid, or I'll be as good as

my word—see if I won't. You grow quite provoking."

"And you grow so cross—and you're tyrannical."

"Say that again, if you dare. Tyrannical! I'm sure that word's been put into your mouth. Tell me this moment, Flavia, who dared teach you to call me tyrannical? I'm sure I care for you more than anything in the whole world; but I won't bear your whims and tempers more than anybody's—and I won't bear to be called names, and above all, 'tyrannical.' It's no word of yours. Who put it into your mouth? Was it that great Tony Lumpkin—that envious, awkward booby, Harry?"

"Oh, you're there, Master Harry!" suddenly turning round. "What brought you here, if you please, sir?"

"I heard you talk of using your whip to Flavia," said Harry, doggedly, "and I came here to tell you I wouldn't suffer it."

"You not suffer it! What business have you to interfere between me and my own cousin Master Jackanapes? Go about your business

you city put," cried Lord George, in a passion; "don't meddle with us."

"These are your grandmother's grounds, and you may do and say what you please to me; but in no grounds and no place will I stand by and see a little girl tyrannized over by a big boy," said Harry, sturdily; for his blood was thoroughly up.

"Tyrannized!—tyrannical! Oh, you've taught her the word; I thought so. Take that—for meddling between me and mine," cried Lord George, passionately, endeavouring to strike him. But Harry parried the blow, and the next moment laid his rival at his feet.

The blood gushed from his mouth and nose.

Flavia, who had stood by almost petrified with terror at this scene, looking in a bewildered manner, first at one and then at the other, at this spectacle uttered a scream of horror, and calling out, "Oh, you naughty, wicked boy! how dare you. You have killed him," threw herself upon the ground by her fallen knight, and tried to raise his head, calling out, "Oh, George, are you

hurt?—Are you hurt?—Are you killed?—Wicked boy!—Where is it?—Are you killed?"

"No; it's only my nose bleeds a little," said Lord George, getting up from the ground, and taking her in his arms and kissing her. "You're a dear generous little creature, Flavia; and how could I talk of whipping you? I'll never do it again, believe me; and as for that fellow who threw me down,—why it's truth I struck at him first, and so he'd a right,—and I'm not much hurt. Here, Wilmington, there's my hand, if you like; but mind what I say,—if you ever dare come meddling and mixing between Flavia and me again, I'll thrash you, sir, that I will, though I were to fall dead the next moment after doing it."

It is impossible to describe the effect produced upon Harry by this scene and by this speech, or the confusion of thought which it had produced.

With a temper such as his, no effort cost him so much as the one he had just made. To put himself forward to interfere in the concerns of others was always repugnant to him. He had been worked up to energy by his indignation at

the tyranny which Lord George, in spite of the love he professed, was continually exercising over this little girl; and the idea of his venturing to threaten her with the lash had roused him into a paroxysm approaching to fury. He had felt all this for her; he had stepped forward to defend her from wrong, and avenge her injuries: and this was the return from him and from her. From him, a sort of generous forgiveness,—from her, nothing but looks of mingled dread and abhorrence as regarded himself, and of love and pity as regarded his rival.

From that day he became more than ever dull and melancholy; he took no further notice of Flavia, and only counted the hours till he should return home.

The remainder of the week was long afterwards empressed upon his memory, as one of the deepest gloom and mortification; but it was illuminated by one bright gleam at the end.

It was the last evening he was to stay, and he was walking in a retired walk formed by a close-clipped yew hedge, upon the other side of which there was a terrace forming another walk. As

here he was sauntering up and down, he heard voices approaching, and before he was aware, these words reached him:

"You may say what you like, George, but I am sorry for him."

"He's as ill-tempered, surly, ill-mannered, a cub as ever I saw in my life."

"He wasn't always so."

"Well, he's so now,—and that's enough for me."

"I don't think we've been good-natured to him since the others went."

"I don't care whether we have or not; I'm not come here to spend my holidays in making the civil to lubbers like that."

"He *is* very ugly, but he used to be very kind about the strawberries; and I'm sorry I've been ungrateful, that I am."

A servant in a splendid livery, driving a pair of beautiful horses in a somewhat too showy

phaeton, came to fetch Harry away. He was to join his father and mother at a sea-bathing place, at no great distance from Castle Delaval. Lord George and Flavia stood together at the breakfast-room window as the handsome equipage passed by to the door, where it remained awaiting Harry. Lord George surveyed it with something very like envy.

"Oh! what a beautiful pair of horses," said Flavia; "and what a pretty carriage! I wonder whether Harry can drive them himself."

"No,—no,—I'll be bound."

"You'd like to have such a pair to drive, wouldn't you, George? and how well you'd drive them!"

"Like to have!—No, I shouldn't like to have anything so vulgar and fine. Why, the harness is plated all over, I think; and the carriage!—did you ever see such a thing?"

"It's very pretty, I think."

"I suppose you'd like a ride in it?"

"Yes, very much.—I wish mamma, or grandmamma, would have phaetons,—or your mamma, George, and then you'd drive me."

"Yes, I dare say. And now, I dare say, you're longing to drive with Harry. Oh, yes, you'd soon forsake me for him, if you saw these fine things every day," said her cousin pettishly.

"You think I should? Very well. But I never like anybody the better for being fine; and that you ought to know, George. I don't love fine things. At least, some way, where people have all sorts of fine things I think it makes 'em disagreeable. I don't like the girls at school for it; and I am glad grandmamma does not make me fine. And if I like Harry at all—and sometimes I do like him, though you say he is such a lout,—it's not because he *is*, but because he isn't fine. Nor Caroline either. They're not a bit fine. They could be if they would; for their father's as rich —as rich—as this," stretching out her arms wide. "And sometimes, George," said she, looking at him slyly, "I think you would be fine if you could,—and then I like them better than you."

"If you dare to say that again I'll kill you," seizing her arm angrily and shaking it.

"Don't, George," she said. "I don't like you when you are cross."

"You ought not to provoke me beyond bearing, then. You know one unkind word from you drives me mad. I can't bear you to say such things, Flavia. You know I can't."

"Well, then," yielding and gentle as usual, "I'm sure I won't. I am so sorry when I vex you, George; but I wish I could say what comes into my head as it comes, without making you so angry."

Harry entered to bid them good-bye.

"Farewell, Miss Flavia," he said. "Farewell, Lord George."

He certainly did not look the least elevated by the prospect of driving off in the beautiful phaeton. But he was very glad to go, and he was more animated than usual, and looked happier.

"Farewell," said Lord George. "That's a dandy sort of thing your father has got there."

"Is it?" said Harry. "Oh, yes, I see he's sent the phaeton. He's very good-natured. He knows how I like driving it."

"Do you drive those spirited, prancing horses yourself, Harry?" said little Flavia.

"To be sure I do. Why should'nt I?"

He visibly rose in the little lady's esteem.

Lord George said nothing; but he felt all the uncomfortable feelings which envy and jealousy combined produce. He could not bear the idea of Harry not only possessing the right, but the power, to drive away before his cousin in this dashing style. He measured the effect produced upon her by that produced upon himself.

He did her very great injustice.

She was only pleased to see a trait of manliness where she had not expected it. She was still perfectly insensible to the show and parade.

However, the parting was now over. Harry ascended his father's phaeton, the servant surrendered the reins into his hands, and away he drove, in a style that astonished Lord George, who henceforward never despised him altogether, as he had ventured to do before.

He began, however, turning to Flavia, to abuse the carriage again; to declare it the vulgarest and most tawdry set-out he had ever seen; and to ridicule the way in which Harry Wilmington held the reins.

She detected something of the envy that was so

clumsily concealed, and wished George would not talk in this way,—and she thought she liked him a good deal less for it; but he soon recovered his good humour when the cause which excited it had passed away, and was as lively and pleasant as ever.

Did Flavia as soon forget all these different impressions?

These slight sketches will suffice to show what these young people were as children.

Some years have passed over their heads before we meet them again.

CHAPTER IV.

I felt a moral joy akin to pride,
While watching her: to see such human flowers.
T. E. READE.

THE carriage in which Harry is travelling to rejoin his father and mother, is bound for the same sea-bathing place to which, in the enviable phaeton, he had driven himself some years before. When he arrived at his journey's end, it stopped before the door of a splendid lodging-house—the largest, the most handsomely furnished, and the best situated of all belonging to this sea-bathing place, where Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington were at present residing.

The sparkling sea washed the outer edge of the broad esplanade upon which the houses were situated, and the waves, with their lulling sound, were heard hoarsely breaking against it. It was a bright, beautiful, gleaming day, and the sun shone upon the green ocean; the esplanade was covered with gay groups of people walking up and down; and attending the very gayest of these groups, consisting of some very showily-dressed ladies, and flashy-looking, handsome young men, the very gayest-looking, the handsomest, and may it not be said, most flashy among them all, Harry descried his father.

Mr. Wilmington was a tall, finely-made man; and there was a sort of natural elegance in his face and figure, which he strove to set off to the very best advantage by every means in his power. Every means which the expenditure of money could secure, he certainly could command; and therefore his dress was most rigorously arranged after the first models, and came from the hands of the most fashionable (then) tailor; and the rest of his attire, his boots, his hat, his cane—everything, in short, being from the hands of artists most

eminent in their line. Nothing was ever spared in any way, that could render him the complete gentleman, as he thought—and yet, in all that goes to form a just idea of the complete gentleman, how much was sadly wanting! Perhaps he had an obscure consciousness of this himself; and that feeling it was which gave a certain effort and anxiety to his manner when in company with those moving in circles superior to his own,—for which little humiliation, it must be confessed, he amply repaid himself, when in society with equals or inferiors, by the easy complacency, amounting to self-sufficiency, with which he carried himself. He was at this present moment in that happy mood and the highest spirits, attending upon some dashing young ladies now at the place, who held a nominal rank above his own. They were, nevertheless, evidently pleased and happy, dashing and fashionable as they were, to number the rich and handsome Mr. Wilmington as one of their train.

His wife was almost entirely confined to the house by the state of her health, and his time was therefore much at his own disposal; not that he

was guilty—fond of show and display as he was—of unkindness or neglect: he gave her as much of his time and his company, and a great deal more of his money, than she wanted. She was, as I have said, of so different a disposition from his, that his society was in fact of little or no value to her; so that she was better pleased when he was amusing himself in the above way, than if he had devoted all his time to her. But this she scrupulously concealed from her children, carefully bringing them up to love and respect the man she once had loved too well herself—a task in which she had as yet pretty well succeeded. Mr. Wilmington's good humour and ready indulgence had won the love of his children; and they were yet both of them too young to detect the absence of those qualities which would have demanded their respect.

Seeing the carriage drive up the esplanade, Mr. Wilmington was not sorry to stop, under pretence of speaking to Harry, and display his very handsome equipage to the admiring company.

"Well, Harry, my boy, how goes it? How did

you leave our good friends, and the young ladies, and all you left behind you?"

"Oh! thank you, sir, all very well. Where's my mother?"

"Up stairs in the dining-room there, and Caroline with her."

Harry sprang from the carriage, shook hands with his father, and was soon up stairs.

The room was darkened, the mother lay as usual upon her couch, breathing with difficulty and suffering much. Caroline was sitting by her at work, endeavouring to amuse her with such of the little chit-chat of the place as she had been able to pick up.

"Is that you—is that my own boy?"

"Yes, dearest, dearest mother—and oh! so glad to come home again."

"Are you, my dear fellow? Come to me, let me have a kiss from my dear boy. Draw the blind a little, Carry, that I may see how he is looking. Dear boy!—so well!—and yet—have you been enjoying yourself, my own?"

"I ought to have been," said her son, "and it is my own fault if I have not; but, mother, you

know what a shy, dull fellow I am anywhere but at home with you. I sometimes think that your love spoils me, dear mother—your tenderness and partiality make me too sensible of the slights and indifference of others;—but don't talk of it, dear mother—Caroline lectures me about these things; and when I am out of company, I am so glad to have done thinking about it, and enjoy my dear, dear home again. How well my father is looking! and what a charming house you have got!—and this delicious sea!—Does my father boat?"

"Do you not know?" said his mother. "Perhap he means to surprise you. Your father has bought the Esmeralda, Sir William Hereford's yacht, the largest and most beautiful vessel in the club—she lies moored at no great distance. It was very kindly done of him—he thought a sea voyage might be of use to me; but I think I would rather stay quietly where I am;—however you and Caroline will enjoy it."

"Dear mother, we shall not either of us enjoy it much withouty ou," said both.

Harry's mother was a very thin, pale, delicate woman, with nerves of the most sickly irritability, uncertain spirits, and little, if any, physical strength; one of those imperfect and feeble constitutions which render the body, as it were, the prison instead of the instrument of the mind,—a troublesome, impeding tyrant, instead of the glad and obedient minister it ought to be. It was probably from her that the young man had derived that constitutional shyness, self-distrust and timidity, which amounted almost to infirmity, and interfered so much with his happiness, and at times even with his usefulness; but from her he might in compensation justly claim the noble inheritance of a clear and sound understanding, and a heart as free from selfishness, vanity, or folly of this nature, as ever beat in the human bosom.

Mrs. Wilmington was so completely a prisoner, so entirely confined to her drawing-room sofa, and to gentle airings in her own close carriage, that it was almost impossible for a wife and a mother to take less part than she was able to do in the superintendence of her household. The

fine brown-eyed girl, so erect and spirited in look and gesture, whom it was difficult to believe could be the daughter of so frail a being, had, therefore, as I have told you, received the usual routine of education at a fashionable school; here she had found herself entirely out of her element, and had made no figure in those accomplishments which form so large an object of attention in such places: however, as she held up her head remarkably well, and showed a decided taste for Algebra, Greek, and Geology, all which were among the accomplishments professed to be taught at Mrs. Steelcollars', she was almost but not quite as great a favourite with that lady, as the tall and beautiful Miss Emerson, who danced like an angel and played like Henry Herz.

The higher part of her education, however, she had acquired for herself or imbibed from her mother. Her moral and mental education had been complete. With her mother she had read and conversed, and her mind had been opened and cultivated by the side of that sick couch in a way that few governesses and no school

could have accomplished. The rare abilities and noble qualities of this fine girl expanded under this culture, and she was now as remarkable for her mental accomplishments as for her extraordinary strength of comprehension, rectitude of judgment, and force of character.

The care of Harry had been a still dearer task than even this: Mrs. Wilmington perfectly doted upon her son. She loved her husband too, dearly, in spite of the little intrinsic worth of his character: charmed with his gaiety, captivated by the extraordinary beauty of his face and figure, Mrs. Wilmington seemed to have overlooked those defects in both manner and mind which had been evident enough to some of her friends. His affectionate attentions during this long course of delicate health, which might almost be called an uninterrupted illness, had strengthened her affection. Like many fond and partial women, she never seemed to be aware of his many defects; and yet there was a something wanting, which was rather felt than confessed.

Proud as he was of his marriage with a woman of her birth and connections, he would have been

himself more in his element with a more ordinary person. They loved each other, but could not suffice to each other's happiness. He could find delight in nothing but expense and gaiety; she in nothing but quiet and domesticity. It does not appear, however, that Mr. Wilmington's profuse and extravagant habits, or his passion for display, ever excited the least uneasiness in his wife's mind. She knew nothing of business, and, like many other women, considered it a matter completely out of her sphere; indeed, rather piqued herself upon knowing nothing about it, as women are too apt to do upon their ignorance of anything they esteem unfeminine or ungraceful. It was a weakness. Mrs. Wilmington was far from being faultless; she was much like the majority of us,—had some fine and good qualities, and many weaknesses: had most pure and upright intentions, and yet made many mistakes.

Her complete abandonment of herself to this nervous weakness and incapacity,—the manner in which she allowed herself to be conquered by the body,—was probably one. We must not judge others harshly, particularly in such cases. Few

know what efforts have been made, or what was or was not in the sufferer's power, called to this war of the soul against the incapacitating infirmities of the body. But, if the truth is to be told, I am afraid Mrs. Wilmington never had attempted that fight with the persevering earnestness and energy which alone can hold out the chance of victory.

The excessive indulgence of her husband, and the life of unbounded luxury in which she lived, doubtless contributed to produce an enervating effect.

However, though her bodily habits were so languid and indolent, her mind, it is but justice to say, maintained considerable activity, and her children profited largely by that constant communication with her which habits domestic as hers allowed.

One quality she possessed in the highest degree: she was a woman of the nicest feelings of honour. She had been brought up among people where sentiments, quite chivalric in this respect, were habitual. The only thing that she distrusted, that she did not quite like in her husband, was a something—a certain want of delicacy in regard to money

matters, which troubled her; particularly if he ever happened to allude to his speculations and plans for getting money before her, which, indeed, was very rarely the case.

The advantage taken amid rising and falling markets, of intelligence withheld from others, and by which speculations were guided through which others must inevitably become losers, hurt and perplexed her; and she would, in her softest voice, and with her gentlest manner, hint her doubts and her scruples. But her gay partner would silence her with a kiss, bidding her hold her pretty tongue, and not meddle with matters it was impossible she should comprehend.

"Let *me* get the money, and you only busy yourself with spending it. Diamond cut diamond is the soul of commercial transactions, and what every one engaged in them thoroughly understands. What! my sweet casuist, you would not have me go into the market crippled by a thousand imaginary scruples, which never enter the heads of the men I have to meet there?—I should soon be in the Gazette, if I did. Depend upon it, my dear, every man upon 'Change knows very

well how to take care of himself; and it's much better as it is, than if everybody were taking care of everybody. How would business get on in that case, do you think? Such ideas are only fit for your noodle of a Harry; he's quite up to them, which you and he may thank Heaven I am not. But as his fortune will be made for him, he will be able to indulge the luxury of such nice notions, which poor devils like myself unfortunately are not."

Thus would he run on. And this noodle of a Harry, this boy whom the father so little understood, and so greatly undervalued, oh! how dear was the delicate-minded, high-souled, sensitive being to the mother's heart! Far, far the dearer because he was not his father's favourite; far, far the dearer because she looked upon him in that sacred light of one unfortunate, which exercises such a holy influence over the mother's feelings.

She would turn to this idol of her soul, this ideal image of the excellent and the pure, which her son's character, as she fondly painted it to herself, presented; and she would strive to add

one touch, one line more to this fair portraiture of moral beauty.

And thus Harry had grown up.

He was not sent to a great school: he neither received the advantages, nor was exposed to the disadvantages of that system of education. In general, I think I have observed, that those more privately educated receive a higher culture, and have most of their faculties more fully and completely developed than those who have in public schools been called upon to make their own way, and take their chance in the world; but then, one, perhaps, the most important among all the powers, is often found to be weak—namely, that readiness—aptness—cleverness—which may be named the faculty of using the rest.

Harry, of all boys in the world, was the fittest to be trusted to the chances of a public education, for in spite of his sensitiveness and timidity, few boys possessed a higher moral sense, or more admirable moral courage—and the shyness and unhandiness, if I may say so, which proved to him so great an obstruction, would thus, there is little doubt, have been corrected.

It was not his father's fault that he was not sent to Eton or Harrow. Not that Mr. Wilmington had any very refined views as to causes and effects in education: he looked no further than to those places being fashionable, and where his son would meet with good company, and might form useful and modish acquaintance. Upon this account he advocated the plan; but the mother's fears were not to be overcome.

She had heard of the barbarities of fagging, which at that period indeed were sometimes very great—of all sorts of dreadful accidents, which, lumped together, instead of taken upon the average of numbers, are undoubtedly appalling for a mother to think of. These things were sufficient to shake her sensitive nerves; but she had a better reason:—she had heard of the vices and the follies too often practised where numbers of boys are thus brought together, and she was terrified at this beyond measure. To expose her innocent boy to such contamination, was an idea too dreadful. She forgot how many good boys would be found in a large community; and that a boy of good disposition and well brought up at home, could, and

would choose his associates from among them, and she did not rightly estimate Harry's disposition. She feared he would prove facile, because he was gentle and obliging; and a moral coward, because he was a social one. Her heart shrunk from exposing her treasure to these fiery trials. And what mother's heart but must tremble and shudder when first she sends the sweet innocent being from the shelter of her anxious care, to peril the purity of his heart, and the health of hisframe, and expose his virtue and happiness to all these rude chances?

Who can wonder? and what shall we say?

Except that happily the spirit of improvement has reached these ancient seats of education; that the evils are vastly diminished, and the good to be derived from them vastly enhanced; and that the man seems upon the whole to profit by this species of early discipline of the boy, among the struggles and temptations to which he is exposed with his fellows. Still, enough remains uncorrected to terrify any conscientious mother.

So Harry was sent to a very select private school, where few were admitted—where Lord

George went as a young boy upon his passage to Eton, but where Selwyn and himself completed their school education.

"We shall not either of us enjoy it much without you," said both.

"But I hope you will, my dears, or your father will be grievously disappointed; for to enjoy it myself is really impossible. I could not bear the sea-sickness even for an hour, still less all the little fatigues to which the day will give rise. But you two must go and be as happy as you possibly can; for, next to pleasing me," she added, with a tender smile, "the greatest satisfaction your dear father has upon earth, is to give pleasure to his children."

Perhaps that was not altogether the fact; but she thought so; and, as far as she was concerned, that was as well.

"I shall like the yachting well enough," said Harry. "I think I should like it very much if Carry, and I, and Selwyn, and my father had it to

ourselves; but there will be a crowd of people on board that I neither know nor care for,—and in that case I would rather be anywhere else in the world. I detest fine people."

"Ah, Harry!" said the gentle mother, "how I dislike to hear you talk in that manner! Will you never be ashamed of being such a young savage? Shall I never reconcile my own boy to civilized society? Do you know, dear, the more you dislike it, the more I think you ought to be forced into it? Don't you, dear Carry?"

"That I do, mamma. I can't think what it is that Harry abominates so much in society. I am sure I find almost everybody tolerable, and most people pleasant. Though I don't suppose one must expect many people to be particularly amiable, wise, or charming, like you, dear mamma."

"That's it," said Harry. "I like nobody's company but yours and Carry's. That quite contents me; and if it contents you, I do not see that I am bound to content other people."

"But what if it does not quite content me? And what if it does not at all content your father?"

"Oh! but, mother, be reasonable. Let it content you, and as for my father, I don't think he cares much about it. And, indeed, I do him so little credit,—I am so loutish and so stupid,—that he would be better pleased, I believe, never to have me with him in company. He likes Carry. Carry is handsome, and clever, and gay, and holds up her head, and walks firm;—I am ugly, and slow, and dull, and hold my head down, and walk with my knees knocking together. What can my father do but be ashamed of such a son,—and what better than leave him to keep company with a dear, dear mother, who loves him in spite of all his wantings?"

"Ah, Harry! But why will you be stupid, and dull, and hold down your head, and hesitate in your walk?" said Caroline. "If you would take mamma's advice, and go out a good deal more, and use yourself to company, you would lose all those disagreeable feelings; and then my father would be as proud of you as he is fond of you;—for he loves you exceedingly in his heart. That I am certain of."

"Then he is a most generous and affectionate

father," said Harry with feeling, "to love one who must be a constant source of mortification to a man so brilliant as himself. But you are right, Caroline; never son met with more indulgence from a father in every way than I have done from mine."

"If you thought it would please him, dear mother," turning to her, "that I should go upon this yachting party, I am sure that would make it quite a different thing. I ought to say the same of pleasing you,—only that I know it is only with reference to my own good that you care about it—but if it were possible that it would please him, I would go there or anywhere you liked."

"I am sure it would please your father very much, my dear."

Did she really think this? or was she, in her weakness, indulging in one of those deviations from the exact truth for the sake of apparent good, which is the fatal temptation of the feeble?

She had not the strength to assume the mother's authority. She felt glad to get off so easily; to take advantage of her son's grateful desire to

gratify his father, and thus engage him to do what she thought advantageous for himself.

Mischief most often arises from these little deviations from the exact truth, which many people think so harmless. But I don't know that any great harm ensued here; except that it added to the delusion with regard to his father's real character, which the mother would, with her ideas, have thought it an advantage to maintain.

"Then I am sure I ought to go," said the son; "and I will go. But who is to be of this yacht party?"

"Oh, some very fine people," said Caroline, laughing; "but mamma and I would not tell you till you were a good boy, and had promised to go, for fear you should take fright. There will be one that you love, some that you hate;—but you must get over that nonsense, dear Harry, for Lord George is a good-natured fellow; and then there will be the dear, good Duchess, who has promised to come and chaperon Flavia, because her mother is at Paris."

Harry made no reply to this, but turned away

to the window, and looked out upon the esplanade.

It was now crowded with company; but he could easily distinguish the fine tall figure of his father, busily engaged in conversation with the shewy party among which he had first seen him. His eye followed him for some time with a strange mingled feeling of admiration and dissatisfaction. It was impossible for him not to admire that brilliant appearance; and, perhaps, as he glanced at his own short and unambitious figure a something almost like envy might mingle with his admiration; for who that has ever loved, and distrusted his own personal attractions, but has felt a touch of that bitter feeling when placed in strong contrast with another, and that other so singularly endowed in this respect as was the handsome Mr. Wilmington?

But it was not transient feelings such as these, which lay at the root of that obscure sentiment of distrust and dissatisfaction,—as I have called it —which began now to mingle, almost imperceptibly to himself, with Harry's feelings, as regarded his father. In the first place, his taste, which was

so pure and delicate, revolted instinctively against everything that in the least degree bordered upon pretension, affectation, or display. He carried this delicacy to excess, as affected himself, — almost to a pernicious excess. He was ready, in his abhorrence of varnish, to neglect polish,—a mistake into which men of his temper are apt to fall; and from the ill effects of which he was, I think, preserved only by the extreme gentleness and unselfishness of his temper.

One so gentle could not be rough: one so unselfish could not be rude. He might be awkward though, and that he was; but to a person of fine taste his little awkwardnesses would have been redeemed by the truth and simplicity which pervaded every action,—would have been a thousand times more pleasing than the somewhat flashy and overdone manners of the father. It was this flashiness, this love of display, and, above all, this manner of the *ci-devant jeune homme*, which Harry could not endure. It irritated him beyond measure. Yet such was the simplicity of his filial piety, that he resisted such feelings whenever they arose, and tried to per-

suade himself that the fault lay in his own fastidiousness and singularity. But there were other and still more serious grounds of uneasiness and suspicion, which began to take rise as the young man advanced in age, and became an observer—a quiet but acute observer—of what was passing around him. This was his father's excessive passion for display, and habits of unbounded expense. It was not as yet so much as a matter of prudence,—for he had not the slightest reason to doubt his father's means of supplying this lavish expenditure,—as a matter of feeling and principle.

In this respect,—almost an exception to young men of the present day,—Harry positively disliked extravagance and luxury, even when justified by the most abundant fortune. The splendid apartments, the gilding, the painting, the plate, the glass, the velvets the grand feasts,—nay, even the highly ornamented gardens of his father's magnificent house at Roehampton,—were oppressive and distasteful to him. His own apartment, in the midst of so much splendour, was fitted up with an almost Spartan simplicity.

He left the berceaux, the parterres, the beautiful plantations of his father's gardens, and loved to wander amidst the trees and shades of Wimbledon Park, to listen to the lowing cattle, the nightingales singing in the thickets, and watch the sun rise upon the dewy grass, whilst the breath of morning played upon his pure young brow.

In dress it was the same: his father's splendid waistcoats, inestimable diamond ring, and studs that might have been fitted for an emperor, were to him positive sources of pain. In vain his fond mother,—in vain his lavish and indulgent father, bought choice ornaments for their son,—he received them with feelings of a tender gratitude, which glistened in his dark eye, and coloured his pale cheek; but not even the affection such little cares inspired, could induce him to wear such ornaments.

When reproached tenderly with this by his mother, he would smile gently, and say that his person was too plain to bear lighting up,—that the less observation he excited the better,—he should make his way,—that it was his father's part

to shine and his to be obscure, and the more obscure the better for him.

Caroline would stand by whilst these little discussions were going on, with her large dark eyes fixed upon her brother, and her expressive and finely-moulded countenance filled with looks of love and approbation,—an intensity of sisterly admiration and affection! but she never said anything,—there was a sympathy between these two so strong that words were unnecessary. Caroline adhered to the same simplicity of taste and habits as her brother; the fine young creature was always dressed with the utmost simplicity: but then, everything she wore became her so well, that neither father, mother, nor friend could wish for an alteration.

Harry, as he now stood at the window, watching the scene before him, became aware of the beautiful yacht which was just approaching the land, all sails set, streamers flying, and bearing herself gracefully before the wind. He could not but admire the lovely vessel, which was of considerable size for a pleasure yacht—as there she came forward over the sparkling waves, like a beau-

tiful sea-bird, with her snowy wings expanded for flight.

"Here comes the Esmeralda," he said, turning to his sister. "Dear mother, do not you think it would do you good to take one sail? she is a charming craft indeed. Impossible," added he, smiling, "for any one to be sea-sick upon her; and the day is delightful."

"No, my dear," said the poor captive of infirm nerves, "I am not equal to it;—but I hear your father's impatient step upon the stairs. Carry, are you ready?"

"In one moment, mamma."

Mr. Wilmington entered the room rather in a bustle and a flurry.

"Harry, boy, are you ready? Is that the best sea cloak you have, lad? Really, if that is your costume, young man, I shall be obliged to send you to the steerage."

He had a splendid boat-cloak hanging upon his arm,—very much too ornate, as Harry thought, for salt-water splashing.

"Here, Reynolds, fetch Master Harry that cloak of mine with the sable collar, which lies in my dressing-room."

"Thank you, sir," said his son; "your vestments, I am sorry to say, are miles too long for me. I won't trouble you, Reynolds;—this will do very well."

"Is all safely stored?—the pines, the Perigord pies, the ortolans, the truffles,—the Duchess will like *them*—those grapes I sent for from London! and above all the materials for the Burgundy cup—"

In a fussy, hurried manner,

"Yes, sir,—yes, Mr. Wilmington,—everything," said the accomplished Reynolds; "all has been on board since eight o'clock. I thought it as well to add a few bottles of Chablis—"

"Very well. Is there nothing else you can think of, Reynolds?"

"Nothing, Mr. Wilmington;—positively, nothing."

"Oh! here comes my wood-nymph; my,—my young Diana!—my Caroline! Why, Carry, you really surpass yourself. I never saw such a girl. Well, that black cloak and straw hat are infinitely becoming, I must own; but there are such dresses going on board! Mrs. Emerson, for instance,

—her bonnet is just from Paris, and her veil new from Brussells, arrived yesterday;—and such a dress! I am afraid, child, you will look very meanly among them all: but you are so handsome, there's no saying. Yet, I think Mrs. Wilmington's lace veil,—the one I gave her the other day—"

"Oh, positively no, papa,—I'm at home upon your yacht;—pray let me be as I am. I could not have a fine veil—and that is such a beauty—flying about my head, flapping like a sea-bird. Oh! let us be gone. It is a most charming morning."

CHAPTER V.

Like a thing of spirit-birth,
Floating on our surface-earth!

T. E. READE.

It was as she said.

The heavens, one pure blue expanse, above—the sea, clear and bright as emerald, beneath—heaving in gentle waves under the influence of a light refreshing breeze which sparkled as they rose and fell in the gleaming sun, and broke in low murmurs upon the sand.

Several small boats were dancing upon the water near a few rocks, which, covered with black tufts of sea-tang, their little caves fringed with

scarlet and yellow sea anemones, broke into the from the shore.

A very gay—not to say very smart—party was gathered together upon the beach, waiting for the Duchess, who had not yet arrived. There were bonnets—pink, white, and blue—flowers and veils, delicate shawls, and elegant cloaks, and parasols of the softest colours in abundance; and though it might be very true that such delicate things and such gay colours were rather out of place in a yachting party, I am ashamed to say for myself, that as I stood by, watching the gay throng, though I thought Caroline looked charming in her simple attire, I could not regret that the crowd were not of her taste. It looked so bright, so pretty as it was, and set off my favourite to the more advantage.

Mr. Wilmington, towering among the rest with his fine figure and showy address, was to be seen here, there, and everywhere, as if he multiplied himself in his anxiety to do the honours of his party.

I thought there was something almost amiable in this endeavour to please, and to have every

body pleased; and yet it was impossible not to detect a sort of latent vulgarity of soul that transpired through all the exterior graces of this singularly fine and handsome man. I turned away from him, and looked to his son.

Harry was standing near the boats—not inactive, though quiet. He was attending to the accommodation prepared for those who were to go in the smaller boats; not in the one so ostentatiously arrayed to receive the Duchess and her party, where places could not be for every one.

He said little, and certainly had not the slightest appearance of fuss or hurry; but he gave his orders briefly and distinctly, and I observed that they were promptly attended to.

Presently the sound of carriage wheels was heard; and I saw him hastily lift up his head—look round—change colour—and then turn to the water again.

The carriage was a coach; and I could see contained two ladies upon the back seat, a gentleman, extended at full length, occupying the front one.

The lady in the farther corner was very old, and all muffled up in silks and fine laces, with a

close white satin bonnet, just as I love to see old age. I love to see this modesty of old age—this wrapping up of the frail relics of what once was grace and beauty—those grey hairs braided over the brow—this calm submission to the inevitable doom which condemns the fairest to wrinkles and decay. It is very beautiful, holy, and touching. More still, do I love to contemplate the calm, gentle composure—the reverence and the wisdom of many years—the tranquil softness of past sorrows—the print of a life whose every accident has left some fresh touch of excellence behind it.

And such was the Duchess. I wish I could by words do justice to the impression she made upon me.

But what words shall I use to paint the fair young creature at her side?

A small beautiful fairy she was. It is a hackneyed expression, but she literally seemed a fairy. Her figure was the most perfectly and exquisitely proportioned that it was possible for poet to have imagined, or sculptor called into existence. This excessive beauty of form, I suppose, it was, that gave such charm to even the slightest motion.

She was the picture of health; and the elastic footstep seemed almost too light to touch the earth. Then the face, which I now saw looking impatiently out of the window! What a sweet, radiant, blooming face it was! Such a lovely, gay, rosy colour—yet so delicately rosy! Eyes so bright—so sweet—so inexpressibly charming! A smile, that it was like paradise to gaze upon—such an ineffable air of kindness, truth, affectionateness, goodness. You will think I am in danger of doting, like the poor fellow who stood, his eyes fixed upon the water, his heart fluttering with varying feelings. But I am an old man; it is my privilege now to admire, to dote, to adore, without being troubled with those hopes and fears, of which in my youth I had my share as well as other young people. I could gaze without danger upon this sweet being, as one of the handsomest young fellows I ever saw, springing up from his recumbent posture as the coach stopped, jumped from the carriage, and handed her out: having done so, he was going to put her arm under his, and walk away towards the boats; but she stopped, and saying, "Grandmamma!" turned to the car-

riage, and most carefully assisted the old lady to descend; which she did with some difficulty, aided by her servants, and now, indeed, by Lord George, for he it was.

Having performed this duty, he again wanted to appropriate Flavia to himself, and leave the Duchess to the care of her people; but the young creature did not seem to understand it in that way at all; I saw her shake him off and give her little arm to her grandmother, looking up at him as she did so with a pretty, wicked smile, when she saw he looked cross and disappointed, as much as to say, "No, no, don't think of such a thing; grandmamma before all." But they were instantly joined by Mr. Wilmington, who, hurrying to the Duchess, offered his arm with the most officious politeness. Lord George then made another effort to appropriate Flavia, but she seemed to prefer being left at liberty, and sprang forwards to meet Caroline who was approaching, and with whom a joyful greeting was exchanged. Harry now came up, and in a shy and awkward manner, which gave a great coldness to his air, responded to the young lady's friendly greeting.

I saw all this little scene as there I stood—saw Lord George glance at Harry, measure him from head to foot with a sarcastic air of satisfaction; Harry glance at Lord George, and instantly turn away and busy himself with the boats. Flavia meantime took Caroline's arm, gaily laughing and talking, and tripped down to the water.

The boat prepared for the royal party, I was going to say—the Duchess was almost respected as such in this circle—was soon filled; she was placed in the comfortable seat prepared for her—Lord George, and Flavia, and Caroline of course with her; Mr. Wilmington, with a good deal of fuss, succeeded in getting most of those on board whom he had selected for this honour; among whom presently appeared the elegant Mrs. Emerson and her beautiful daughter, Lizzy. Harry was not of the happy few; his father left him to take care of the remainder and less distinguished members of the party—a subordinate place for which he deemed his ungraceful son exactly fitted; and so indeed he was, if the kindest attention to the comforts of every one, especially of the more obscure, could fit a man for such an office.

There was some little delay in the starting, during which Lord George, seated between Flavia and the Duchess, and in the highest possible spirits, was full of fun, really good fun—and did his best to amuse her. She laughed, looking over the side of the boat towards the land, where the remnant of the party was embarking under Harry's directions; among whom there were certainly some rather droll figures, who afforded subject matter sufficient for the wicked wit. His wit was upon the whole inoffensive and fair enough; but sometimes it was seasoned with a little more illnature than some persons would have approved; and always tinctured with a certain arrogance, when he found himself in a society of the present description.

Caroline was sometimes amused, often inclined to be angry. Flavia laughed. How can she laugh so at everything Lord George says—foolish or not? thought Caroline. She did not perceive that Flavia was at that moment laughing by rote, as one might say—laughing without even hearing what Lord George said, from mere absence of mind. She was watching the other boats.

She saw an elderly lady, dressed in a widow's dress, and a very plain, delicate-looking girl, standing humbly on one side, whilst every one else was pressing forward and getting themselves good places.

Harry was standing there, helping people into the boat; and she watched these two, pushed and shuffled aside by the bustling throng. Then she saw him speak to one of the sailors, and jump over the side of the boat, leaving the man to take his place—go up to this poorly-dressed widow and this plain, feeble-looking girl—exchange some kind greetings—very cordial indeed they appeared to her—and then, offering an arm to each, attend them to the water's edge; he then helped them in, placed them in a convenient place—to do which he was forced to derange some very gaily-dressed young men, who looked contemptuously at the intruders—then he wrapped the young lady in his own boat-cloak, and giving the signal, the boats started, and he placed himself by her side.

"Who's that?" said Flavia to Caroline.

"Who? where? whom do you mean?"

"Do you see the boat your brother is in? the

last of them. Oh, you can't see it now—never mind."

And now they are all upon the deck, where a white awning is stretched to shelter them from the sun, gaily decked out and perfumed with exotic flowers, or flowers forced to blow before their time. Moss-roses and lilacs in abundance, and beautiful heaths and lilies, &c., &c. If the vessel should roll much it is to be feared these beautiful things will tumble about; but it will not roll upon such a day.

The cabin of this yacht is the most richly ornamented thing you ever saw. Pannelled with glass, and china, on which last bouquets of flowers are painted,—and no gilding spared, you may be sure of that. And there is gilding upon the head, as if it were a barge for my Lord Mayor; and upon the railings,—here, and there, and everywhere. Too much of it for my taste, even though I am rather fond of the bright and fine. Sadly too

much for Harry's, which wanted the vulgarity of mine.

However, it looks excessively gay with all those pretty women upon it; and there are, as usual upon such occasions, a few happy and gratified, and a great many neither gratified nor happy.

Mrs. Emerson is among the first. Mr. Wilmington has introduced this very fine lady to the good old Duchess, and she is sitting by her, and has the supreme felicity and privilege of entertaining her; and her daughter, the beautiful Lizzy, is advanced to honours also, and sits by Flavia, whom she has known at school, and has, moreover, the delight and distinction of being often addressed by Lord George himself. Indeed, he seems to take great notice of her; talks to her, and directs his best jokes to her; and at last, oh triumph! actually gets up from his place between Flavia and the Duchess, and takes possession of the one just vacated by Caroline at Miss Emerson's side.

And how he flirted when there,—and the pleasure he took in making this beautiful young girl believe in the sudden admiration with which she

had inspired him;—and the way in which she laid herself open to this impertinent flattery, was a very contemptible but a very ordinary picture of what happens between fashionable young lordlings and very handsome young ladies—not aristocratic or in society. That is when beauty atones for the moment for their other shortcomings, and makes them objects deserving of this insolent sort of homage,—of the full impertinence of which it would be very well for them to be thoroughly aware.

Flavia coloured, and looked vexed, offended, and peevish; all which doubled Lord George's enjoyment. Every now and then he cast a glance at her from his handsome saucy eyes, as much as to say, "Now, really, is it possible? Can you for a moment?" And, gratified to the extreme with what he took for jealousy, he was in higher and more exuberant spirits than ever.

When the time for the collation came, he started up to look for Caroline, and offered his other arm to Miss Emerson, with a glance of high enjoyment to see how Flavia would like it.

Her pretty lip had a curious expression. There was a something contemptuous, which he would not quite have liked, had it not evidently been the result of ill humour.

But Miss Emerson fluttered, and chatted, and looked really splendidly handsome thus animated, and he turned away and found Caroline, and took her down, and Flavia was left standing there. Mr. Wilmington had attended the Duchess and provided for Mrs. Emerson, concluding, of course, that Flavia would be the charge of Lord George.

She looked round. Harry was at a little distance, about to offer his arm, as it would seem, to the poor widow; but he glanced that way, saw Miss L—— standing there alone, turned to Selwyn, who stood by, begged him to take care of Mrs. Freeman, and was at her side, and with his arm offered, in a moment. He changed colour several times as she took it, and stammered and looked very shy,—but oh, so happy! It was really beautiful to see what expression could do for that countenance. They went down together, she talking to him; but in a low subdued voice, and

not with her usual gaiety;—and I turned to look at Selwyn.

He was a very interesting-looking person, very gentleman-like in his appearance, being pale, but with a particularly refined cast of countenance, evidently suffering from ill-health. He was now, as I understood, at Oxford. His manners were, I thought, particularly pleasing, as he assisted this lady and her daughter to the cabin. I think I was, upon the whole, more struck with him than with any one; but he was so extremely silent, and seemed so languid and unwell, that he took scarcely any part in the business of the day.

"And I wanted to ask you who she was that you took such especial care of, Mr. Henry Wilmington, as the company were getting into the boats?"

"Who? I don't remember."

"Don't you? but I watched all your proceedings, and I remember quite well. A very pale girl, looking too sickly for these sort of affairs;—I wonder what she came for. She cannot enjoy such scenes—impossible—except, indeed——"

"Oh, I know who you mean now—Mrs. Freeman and her daughter—Poor thing! enjoy them!

No, I am afraid she cannot; but she comes to please her mother, I believe. It is her mother's idea that her deep melancholy may be in some little degree dissipated by such pictures of life—for those things are but as pictures to her—and that the fine air and sailing upon such a day, may do good. I doubt it myself."

"And is there nothing else here?" said Flavia, a little sarcastically.

My pretty Flavia, do not be so mean. Do not grudge a cast-off lover to the poor girl. It is the poor man's lamb to her. I am afraid we shall hate you if you do that. "Is there nothing here to divert her melancholy, but pictures of life and fresh air? Nothing—Harry—nothing?" looking with meaning; "Take care of what you are about."

"Of what I am about," said he, with simplicity, not having the slightest idea of her meaning, so far were such thoughts from him; "What can you mean?—Poor thing!"

"Ah, Mr. Wilmington! What is the cause of all this melancholy on her part, I wonder?"

"Don't you know?—how should you?—That poor

woman, her mother, was wife to the captain of one of my father's ships. He was a plain, rough fellow, as such men mostly are; but a worthy man, and excellent commander of a vessel. The poor girl's betrothed sailed with him as mate. It was to be his last voyage, poor lad! and then he was to come home and marry her. They were bound for Newfoundland. It's a long, dismal, but an heroic story. The ship struck upon a sunken rock; the boats were got out; all those on board saved; but these two insisted upon being the last to quit the vessel. This good fellow and this brave boy! He was seconding his captain in his attempt to save some provisions, and to rescue them all. They were, with three more sailors, still upon the vessel, when she gave way, went to pieces, and they all perished."

"The poor man had a large venture on board,—the poor lad his all engaged in that venture. They left these two women beggars and friendless, for they had not a relation in the world. The widow bore up, and will fight it out;—the girl will go at last. She, is a common place good-hearted woman, just a proper wife for her rough honest

husband; but the two young ones were different; —I don't know how it was, but there was a delicacy and sensibility about her, that one would wonder how she came by; and he was a fine noble-hearted fellow—poor lad!"

Flavia's glistening eyes were bent upon Harry's face, as with an expression and tone of the deepest feeling he told this little story. He was not, and could not be in the least aware of the interest these moments of deep feeling gave to his countenance. She gazed—was silent—dropped her eyes, mused, and stood there thoughtfully.

"Will you not sit down?—Will you not take something?"

She started as from a brief trance.

"No, I thank you..... Tell me what is become of them?" "Why, they are here. My father is a generous man: he would not leave the widow and daughter of a meritorious servant exposed to pecuniary distress;—he allows them a pension—but sickness is expensive—such allowances necessarily cannot be very large. They are not rich, and among all these fine people look poor—poorer than in fact

they are. I almost wonder the mother likes to come into such scenes; but so it is."

"And when in such scenes, they are exposed to be neglected and shuffled about;—that is always the case; 'why let the stricken deer go weep,' is the maxim of the world. What business have they to parade their crape and their pale faces among us? think they. I saw it as I sat watching what was going on."

"Yes, I suppose it must be so. People don't come to these sort of places to exercise the charities of life. It can hardly be expected—and this is why I wish the poor woman would stay away, for she is one of those who feel such things very much. These sort of common-place minds are peculiarly susceptible of such little mortifications;—over the poor girl they glide as a raindrop over the polished surface of a leaf. Grief elevates and ennobles the mind."

"I don't think there are many minds capable of grief," was Flavia's answer. "People seem to me to hate grief, and to fly from serious thought as the bane of existence. I don't like that—it is so dull to be always laughing."

"Can *you* think so?"

"You will never believe it, but I *do*. Perhaps because I have so much of the one and *none* of the other—I scarcely know what sorrow is."

"And long may that ignorance be yours!" he muttered. Then he looked at her sweet face as it was pensively bent towards the ground; and then it was suddenly turned up to him, and she said,—

"Would that girl dislike to be acquainted with me?—Make me acquainted with sorrow."

He hesitated.

"Would she dislike it?" said Flavia, a little surprised, for she had been too much flattered not to believe that the honour of an introduction to her must be gratifying to any one.

"You would not understand each other. You belong to distant spheres. If you were to talk to her, you would find all your poetic imagination vanish. Her mind and her heart are as I have described them; but you would be disgusted with her *h*'s. A person may feel most tenderly and most generously, yet put an *h* in the wrong place

—but who could retain their interest in them on finding it so?"

"Ah, Mr. Wilmington! can you be more sarcastic than Lord George? That speech is not like you."

"Why not? Is he, alone, to be privileged to see things as they are?"

"Do you think everybody would be,—do you think," with a little hesitation, "I would be guilty of such injustice and hard-heartedness?" and she looked up at him again with those sweet, kind, ingenuous eyes.

He smiled upon her tenderly and softly, and said,—

"It would be difficult to believe it. Yes, I dare say I am unjust—one ought not to attribute one's own weaknesses to others—the effect of fine manners, what I call really fine manners—such as people of your class, such as the Duchess, for instance, possesses,—is very great, much too great, I fear, upon me. It is the supreme charm—the first of beauties and graces in my eyes, deficient as I feel myself to be in such graces; I am astonished at my own susceptibility upon this

matter—I am apt to fancy that what offends my taste, who have so little right to be thus offended, must doubly displease the taste of those habituated to a finer polish in things. Then I feel a sympathy at the same time with those who do not possess these advantages,—a selfish sympathy, I fear. I cannot bear to see intrinsic worth rendered repulsive, and perhaps ridiculous, by some trifling defect in mere external and conventional matters. I feel a reserve, a modesty, a pride for my friends, which, after all," said he, checking himself in this long speech, and smiling, "I am sure my good Mrs. Freeman, for one, would not feel for herself; for to be introduced to the granddaughter of a duchess would form an era in her life. She would never enter into such refinements —and as for the poor girl—I told you, life is become but a dream to her; yet it might afford a fleeting pleasure to be made acquainted with—one so gentle, delicate, and kind,"—he meant to say, but he stammered and hesitated, and did not venture to say it.

She loved to hear him talk in this way. There was something in his manner of thinking and

feeling that she liked very much. Though herself so merry and apparently volatile, she was very fond of what she called conversation—serious talk upon serious subjects. She had an odd taste—she really liked it better than the brilliant nonsense which is the charm of mixed society to most people.

"But you have had nothing—how stupid I am!" said he, recollecting himself. "An ice? some fruit?"

"An ice, if you please."

As she stood with it in her hand she began again,

"So you will not introduce me to that poor girl?—you will not make me acquainted with sorrow."

"God forbid!" said he, with a something she thought charmingly tender in his look and voice; then again checking himself,—"I have changed my mind—I will do you *that honour*."

And she still hanging upon his arm, he approached the little side-table at which the widow and her daughter were sitting, and saying, "Mrs. Freeman, Miss L——,—you have heard of Miss

L.,—begs to have the pleasure of being introduced to you and to Miss Freeman," made them acquainted, and Flavia, taking a place between the two ladies, began to talk to them.

He stood by watching her, and listening, and I watched him. I thought I never saw so much tender admiration expressed by a countenance before. He seemed lost in a not unpleasing train of thought; but his father's voice was heard calling for him, and he started and moved hastily away.

He left Flavia with the talkative Mrs. Freeman, who, as people of her stamp often do, began very soon to speak of her own affairs, whilst the daughter, melancholy and depressed, said little or nothing. The good woman enlarged upon that on which alone she could discourse with much interest, herself and her daughter, and their prospects and concerns. Flavia encouraged this ready openness of communication.

She wanted to make herself acquainted with the feelings and tempers of those who had gone through such unexampled suffering. She thought, in spite of all Harry had said, that there must necessarily be something approaching to the great —something deeply interesting about those who had gone through so much—but, in this instance, as in many others of the kind, there was not. There was nothing to excite admiration of any sort—there was nothing to raise the imagination in any way. The afflictions, the misfortunes had been great, singular, deeply affecting;—the story was simple, grand, beautiful,—the woman was common-place.

Young people should be made well aware of this. They must learn to pity, to love, to be interested, in those who in themselves are neither very loveable, nor at all interesting, if they intend to play the kind, the Christian part.

As Flavia talked, she felt the justice of what Harry had said; she found it very difficult to tolerate the " orses" and the " honour" she was doing her, but she recollected his remarks, with the resolve to overcome her fastidious feelings,

and she talked on kindly and pleasantly. As to the good Mrs. Freeman, she felt very happy thus to be noticed by so fine a young lady, and chatted on more confidentially than ever. And Harry figured in her history: and Flavia heard, how it was Harry who had urged her claims for assistance upon his father; how Mr. Wilmington, who was good-natured, but thoughtless, was apt to forget things of this nature, regarding others as well as herself; how Harry *never* forget them. How much good in secret he did; how moderate were his own expenses, how simple his habits, how generous his deeds. How high his reputation stood for wise and scrupulous honour in business; how highly his abilities were rated by those who knew him well; how kind he had been to her, in so many ways, besides the great essential service he had rendered her by obtaining this pension.

So talked the widow, and Flavia sat there and listened; till at last Lord George came to fetch her away; wondering where she had hid herself all this time. He made himself very merry with the company in which he found her upon such an

occasion, and wished her to come upon deck and dance with him, and shake off all the cobwebs that had been gathering round her in that corner.

The music was sounding gaily upon the deck; but to her someway it seemed discordant,—discordant as she had never heard it before. She, however, consented to dance; but soon felt tired, and bade him let her sit down, and go and dance with some one else. And so he did, and she sat upon a bench by the railing, and looked down upon the beautiful shining glassy waves, and over the fine expansive prospect, and up to the blue heavens, and the beaming sun; and there were thoughts that seemed more in harmony with those things she loved so deeply, than those of Lord George, the gay band, or the polkas they were playing.

CHAPTER VI.

I had a vision of reality;
Such as doth grow upon the eyes of Mind
Intently fixed upon the past- the past,
The prophet of the future: shadowing
From deeds and thoughts of those who suffered here,
Lessons, and prescience of things to come.
T. E. READE.—*Revelations of Life.*

THIS day was an eventful day to more than one present at this little fête.

Such days, vain and unprofitable as they may seem to the moralist and the philosopher, are those which often decide many a young creature's destiny. Unfortunate in this, the young girls, under our present system, may unquestionably be considered; that what is so seriously, so deeply, so really, so infinitely, we may almost add, eternally, important to their happiness, should appa-

rently depend upon the most trifling accidents of society,—the being present or absent from such a party,—nay, the being engaged or disengaged from such a dance. Men, in this object of marriage, appear to suffer themselves to be the sport of such insignificant circumstances. Few of them have the determination to make a choice, or the perseverance to adhere to that choice, and follow it up through the little difficulties and obstructions of social life. Most often they suffer themselves to be literally guided by Fate, and to accept with a sort of passive indifference the lot she puts into their hand. But, independently of this, there can be no doubt that apparently accidental circumstances exercise a very great effect upon the feelings themselves; and the birth of the most powerful sentiment which animates the human heart may be traced to some fortuitous moment whose influence colours the whole of the rest of life. The accident of Lord George choosing to flirt with that handsome and silly, and, in his opinion, vulgar Miss Emerson, for whom he did not care one sixpence, left Flavia at liberty to receive impressions which he found it difficult afterwards to efface.

She had kept up a sort of acquaintance with Harry Wilmington, it is true, by occasionally meeting him when she paid a visit to her friend Caroline, but he was so shy and distant, said so little in the drawing-room when he did come in, appeared to so little advantage in his own family, and before his father especially, that the interest she had taken in him as a boy had mostly died away, and she had thought little of him or about him. But this day the beauty of the scene, a species of beauty which always excited in Flavia a certain feeling of exaltation,—a sort of moral longing after the pure and excellent in the moral world, of which the blue expanse above, the clear crystal of the wave beneath, and all the glories of external nature, are but a type,—had raised the tone of her thoughts, and set her, as they often did, longing.

She loved, she liked, she admired Lord George; she thought she loved him very much; yet in these higher moments she felt dissatisfied with him. There was a seriousness, an earnestness, a desire to penetrate behind this bright veil of external things which surrounded her, and reach to

the truth of life, its purposes, and its end, which was very strong with her; and of which he could not form the slightest comprehension.

They were separated—as the labourers upon that Eastern tower were separated—by the impossibility of understanding each other. Their souls spoke two different languages. She loved him too well not to lament and grieve that he could not understand her better; to find herself, as she so often did, utterly solitary and alone with her lover close by her side. But these feelings would, after all, be only transitory; the evil hour as *he* called it—she did not herself know what to call it—though unhappy, it was so earnest, so full of truth and depth—passed away. Smiles revisited her sweet countenance; she laughed at his drollery; accepted his gay devotion to herself with apparent pleasure; and could almost have asked, as he felt often inclined to do, What could possibly be wanting?

To-day, however, just at the very time when the charming scene which surrounded her, the balmy breeze as it fanned her cheek, the bright sun, the rising and falling waves, the fluttering canvas

above the lulling motion of the vessel,—had all conspired to raise these old feelings in her mind; she was left undisturbed to talk with Harry: to listen to that voice so touching and melodious; to hear the simple, truthful accents from his lips; to observe his kindness and his goodness; and to sympathize with the tender melancholy, but deep and sincere earnestness of his character. She felt what it was to esteem and to approve. And when Lord George, after having done his duty in the dancing way, came and sat down by her, and began to talk as usual, she missed something: his conversation wanted interest, solidity; his voice, the inexpressible charm of deep feeling.

She could not understand where all the charm was gone, which she had once found so prevailing.

He saw that she was graver than usual, and he began to accuse her of it; but he had not the remotest idea of its possible cause. To be jealous of Harry Wilmington would have been too ridiculous. But he began to wish to attract her attention again to himself; he never liked these indifferent moods, in which she seemed occupied

with feelings and thoughts he could not share; which he neither understood nor strove to understand.

"How you sit there, Flavia, looking into the water! What can you see in it? It is so strange of you to take this sudden meditative humour upon an occasion when everybody ought to *make* themselves gay, if they don't feel so. What is the matter with you, Flavia?"

"I don't know—nothing; I was only thinking. There is something in these sort of mixed parties that makes one think. Do you know, George, that I have been hearing a very sad story?"

"A sad story! Pooh, nonsense! Who could be so stupid as to tell you sad stories just at such a time as this? Sad stories!—as if there were not plenty of sad stories going about in the world, and sad things going on too; but who can help it, and what's the use of thinking about them? I wonder who the *malencontreux fâcheux* could be who filled your pretty head with sad stories—and to-day of all days."

"It was my own fault; I asked for the story, and it set me on thinking."

"On thinking! I wish you never would be set *on* thinking, as you call it; you can't think what an odd effect it has upon your face, Flavia, when you set *on* thinking, as you call it. I wonder what women have to do with thinking—pretty women especially. The prettiest—even you—can't stand a studying expression. I declare, as you sat there leaning over the water in a brown study just now, I could hardly believe it was you; you looked so ugly."

She took no notice of this speech, except turning a little away from him, and sighing so slightly that it was almost imperceptible.

"Come now, Flavia," he went on, "don't be so tiresome; don't sit there in that stupid, unsociable manner. I declare"— sitting down by her and speaking in a most affectionate way—"you don't know how I am longing for a little fun and chat. That creature—that Miss Emerson—I'm perfectly sick of telling all sorts of lies and nonsense to her. I want a little rational nonsense with you, my darling Flavia, to refresh my spirits."

"You are very reasonable in your expectations,

I must say. You exhaust your spirits and wear yourself to death with paying attentions to a young lady, because she's excessively handsome; and then, when you are tired, you come and waste your tediousness upon me."

"Oh, we are vexed, are we?" said he, smiling, and looking very engaging—as he hoped and believed, at least. "Sweetest of all possible Flavias, can you do your poor slave so much honour as to be jealous?"

"No," said she, "I am not jealous, because I know you don't care for Miss Emerson the least bit in the world; and besides, I am not quite sure whether I should care the least bit in the world if you did."

"Provoking girl! how can you say so? Besides, I am sure it's not true," said he, with the familiarity of cousinhood and long acquaintance which gave a singular ease to their relations. "Now own it's not true,—there's a good girl,—own you were a little—little tiny bit vexed and out of humour, and inclined to be moody, and look for fishes in the water."

"Not in the least, upon my word. Ah! if you knew."

"If I knew what?"

She lifted up her face, and looked at him.

"If I knew what?"

"How far—far away—my thoughts at that moment were; I really don't know whether you would feel particularly flattered, George."

"Why, I don't suppose, seriously speaking, that you cannot think of other things besides my unlucky self; though I don't take my revenge; I think of nothing but you, or with reference to you."

"George," she said, turning quite round towards him, "one thing I think I ought to think of—letting you make me so many foolish speeches; I wish you would leave off this trick you have of for ever flattering me. I don't like it, indeed I don't, at all."

He laughed.

"I wish you would not always laugh when I speak seriously," said Flavia.

"Why, what else can I do? That little wise way that you put on has such a ridiculous effect upon your queen of the fairy face. I hate to see you serious,—and you ought not to be angry

with me if I am vexed when these fits come over you, for you never seem to care a rush for me at such times,—and I think you do care a little, little tiny, wee bit for me at others. Don't you, Flavia?"

"Yes, I like you very well as *a cousin*," said she, laying an emphasis upon the word, "but I think it is very silly to talk so much about our feelings. All relations ought to love and like each other, if they can,—but the less they talk about likes and dislikes, so much the better."

"Heigh-day!" said he, and then he laughed again, and said he had changed his mind, and that her demure little wise ways were ineffably enchanting to him; and after this sort of half-joking, half-serious admiration, which expression teased her, but which she did not know exactly how to meet, he rose and went away, and joined Selwyn, who was standing talking with Caroline at the other end of the little vessel.

I had been observing that couple with considerable interest. I told you that I thought I had never seen a more feeling and expres-

sive countenance than that of Selwyn,—it was sickly and very pale, and his air was marked with extreme languor. He formed a strong and painful contrast to the fine, vigorous, spirited girl who stood beside him, talking to him in a pleasant, animated manner. Harry was of the party. It was easy for any one to observe, when he and Selwyn were together, how great a pleasure they took in each other's society. They seemed to be united by the strongest ties of friendship, and so, in truth, they were.

Harry loved Selwyn with his whole heart; there was something particularly attractive to a man of his disposition, in the very delicacy of health which rendered Selwyn little acceptable to most youths of his age. Harry was by nature little inclined or fitted to take a share in the stirring amusements common to young men. He was neither a hunter, nor a cricketer, nor a boater. And Selwyn was, by the extreme delicacy of his constitution, equally incapacitated. The two boys, when at school, whilst the rest were engaged in their noisy sports, might be seen sauntering slowly together under the alders and

willows, which fringed a rapid and glassy river that ran by the play-ground.

The other boys would laugh at these two, who lived by the river-side without ever thinking of being fishermen; took no delight in impaling a miserable worm, and were not dexterous enough to cast a fly;—but so long as they were together, they heeded it not, they had courage enough to stand the laugh.

Selwyn, who had not the slightest tincture of Harry's shyness or awkward feelings in society, appreciated to the full the superiority of his mind. His bodily sufferings made him in some respects a physical coward. He required support; he wanted some one on whose judgment and strength of mind he could rely when his own spirits were trembling and his nerves failing. He found this in Harry. He was capable of appreciating the rare qualities of his friend,—his disinterested temper, his simple heart, his excellent understanding, his acute perception of things, his accurate observation of men, and his stores of general information, all secretly acquired, as it were. Qualities obscured to the common eye by his external defects, but

which Selwyn felt as if he loved and valued the more because he loved and valued them almost alone.

There was another feeling that united Selwyn to his friend, and that was the indignant sort of pity he felt for the manner in which he was treated by his father. It drove Selwyn half mad to see the flashy and shallow man quite incapable of even estimating the extent of his son's faculties, oppressing him by the kind of contemptuous indulgence with which he treated him, as a poor, well-meaning fellow, whom he loved for his good nature, but whom it was vain to expect would ever make that figure in the world which was aspired to by his all-accomplished self.

There was something in the way Harry submitted to this; the piety with which, apparently blind to his father's faults, he yielded to this assumed superiority, and suffered himself to sink into insignificance by his side, which angered Selwyn, whilst it made him ready to adore that perfect absence of all selfish vanity or ambition—that childlike freedom from guile—which blinded a man of an understanding so excellent as that

of his friend to the defects of his father's character.

Whether it was the effect of those early childish impressions which his mother had so sedulously imprinted; whether it was that the boy was really dazzled by his father's brilliant appearance; whether it arose from that humility which seemed innate in him, or that it was the mere consequence of possessing a truly affectionate heart, Selwyn saw that Harry loved his father with a tenderness and piety which few sons are found to bestow upon fathers far more worthy.

But I have wandered from the group. I linger and loiter as I go along, and seem to dislike to proceed with the history I have undertaken. I, gifted with the prescience of the prophet, knowing the tale that lies before me, sigh, cast down, hesitate, and resume my pen.

Selwyn loved Harry, but he adored Caroline. That peculiar temper of his, resulting from his physical delicacy, that disposition at once so feeble and so strong, found every feeling excited and satisfied near her. Her strength of character, her force and energy, were a support to his spirits and

nerves, and yet in harmony with what he would himself have been had he been blest with such a hale, strong, instrument of life—if I may so call it—as hers was.

Her simple, straightforward, generous character, was in accordance with all his fine moral taste could desire or imagine of best; and her love and devotion for her brother, her deep sense of his qualities, her feeling for his position, were sympathetic with his own.

Selwyn loved Caroline devotedly; but he had never, even in moments of the most boyish unreserve, hinted his attachment to her. He thought himself one who would probably never live to become a man or take a part in life. He did not expect to live to share in the happiness of youth; his anticipations were but of an early grave. He never thought of endeavouring to secure future bliss; he was content to float along with the present. Caroline was his friend,—his attached and most affectionate friend; he looked as yet no farther. And she was so devoted to her brother, that there seemed room in her heart for no other attachment. She loved Sel-

wyn on her side, but it was less than she loved Harry.

And now she and Selwyn are there standing talking together, and I am looking at them in my quiet old man's way, and watching them in their several parts,—if I may use the term. And now Lord George joins them, and begins to talk in his lively manner to Caroline, and Selwyn, who cannot banter, stands by and smiles and looks amused; and Harry turns away and looks to the other end of the vessel, and takes a few steps that way, and stops as if irresolute, and then two beautiful eyes are raised from watching the waves, and turned to him, and he is at Flavia's side.

And he stayed by her, longing to talk with her again, and finding it impossible to know how to begin, or what to say.

She evidently wished to have some more talk with him. They both felt very shy, but at last the ice was broken by Harry saying,—

"You left two people very much delighted with your condescension, Miss L——, this morning, —poor Mrs. Freeman and her daughter."

"Condescension! What a word! That's not like you, for it's not quite sincere. I am glad—no, I should say sorry—that they should feel in the least in that way; for I still think that a history such as theirs lifts people far above poor little things like me, who have no history at all."

He sat down by her.

"Did you keep that feeling when you had talked with them?" he said, rather to keep the conversation he so delighted in going, than from the interest of the subject to him,—for I am ashamed to say he cared very little about it.

"I am ashamed to own it," she answered; "don't make me say anything about good Mrs. Freeman. You knew me better than I did myself; but I think the daughter is interesting."

"Then you were very good; for you had the kindness to talk to Mrs. Freeman a long time; and the politeness to appear very much interested in what she was saying."

Flavia coloured a little.

He thought he never saw anything so beautiful as that sweet blush, but he little understood its meaning. He would have been indeed a happy

man had the slightest idea of its cause crossed his mind.

"I beg your pardon," said he, with simplicity; "I did not mean to accuse you of insincerity, because I said I thought you so polite. We are not bound to yawn in people's faces, you know."

"I did not know that I appeared particularly interested in what she was saying; and yet I believe I was," said she, and her eyes were lifted up and withdrawn; "she told me a beautiful history."

"Did she venture at such a moment upon her own?"

"Partly—yes; she is a person, I fancy, who has little but her own affairs to talk about."

"Some part of her history is certainly beautiful."

"In that I quite agree with you."

And then she rose, and they joined the others, and this apparently insignificant conversation ended.

But there was a something—an indescribable something that remained to haunt the memories of both.

Harry was more in love than ever with this fairest creature.

She thought very much more about him than she had ever done in her life; and began to wonder whether she ought to allow Lord George's flattering speeches to be continued; — whether that language which had been his from quite early boyhood, and to which she had grown so well accustomed that she thought little about it, ought not to be checked. She could scarcely believe that there was anything very serious in a passion which so lightly expressed itself in words. She already felt that such accents are not those of true love, — not the form in which serious attachment finds expression.

She could not help feeling that there was something in Henry's eyes,—something in the tone of his voice,—that hinted at sentiments far different,—far more serious,—far more interesting.

At all events, the mystery, the doubt, that hung around that character; the reserve, the shyness even, the very embarrassment, which seemed as a veil to obscure his qualities, exercised a strange fascination over her.

She was not romantic, though Lord George called her so; and many, could they have known all that passed in her mind, might have thought her so too. It was not an imaginary life of excitement and rapture that she dreamed of or longed for;—it was real earnest life,—a life of strong affections, strenuous efforts, — of duties even, though painful, of which she dreamed.

And what was the life she led?

One of the most perfect ease and enjoyment: caressed and flattered by all who surrounded her, and truly beloved by all whom she loved. And in the wise and kind grandmother, under whose protection she lived, possessing what is the crown of youthful life,—a real, loving, partial, devoted friend and guardian, one on whose wisdom she couldrely for guidance, on whose tenderness for sympathy, on whose protection for safety.

The world never presented a fairer prospect than that of the life before her;—the world never possessed a sweeter home than that in which she harboured.

There were but few things wanting,—difficulty, which calls forth energy;—contradiction, which

exercises temper;—sorrow, which exalts faith;—death, which teaches truth.

These conditions of our best existence; these conditions of all earnest,—I might say all truly happy existence,—were wanting; and Flavia was, in a degree, what Rasselas found himself in his happy valley.

CHAPTER VII.

Fairest and foremost of the train, that wait
On man's most dignified and happiest state,
Whether we name thee, Charity or Love,
Chief grace below, and all in all above.

COWPER.

I AM tempted to make a little digression, and say something more of the grandmother.

That aged woman, whose elevated rank was indeed her least ornament; though the venerable qualities she possessed received, no doubt, a certain encreased interest, and excited a higher admiration, from that lofty station which she occupied —and justly.

We ought to be just to those above us, as to those below us. We ought to endeavour to esti-

mate the difficulties and temptations which beset those placed above reproof, and out of the reach of ordinary contradictions. We, who are hedged in, as it were, on every side by narrow circumstances, or by limited influence, or by the restraints of those to whom we owe obedience, or by the tempers and infirmities of those with whom we have to live—not in extensive palaces and castles, where every one is independent in his own apartment—but often in the close connection of small rooms, domestic meals, and mutual wants and services. We who occupy some one or other of the varied stages of middle life, are apt to cast an eye of envy—good-natured envy is my meaning here—upon those who, in the possession of more extended advantages,—for advantages in one sense we cannot deny them to be,—are endowed with power, wealth, and influence. Means so fruitful to supply all that the heart of man can wish for himself or desire for others.

But we forget one thing in making an estimate of the happiness of possessing such things; and the thing we forget is our weakness.

The trammels that hamper the ordinary man's

life, are not so much obstructions as supports. He that may do all that he will, has need, in truth, of a most powerful and righteous will; to will what he ought—what is best for others, what is best even for himself.

What energy, what generous determination, what a power of self-government, what virtuous resolution, must have been exercised, when he who might do with impunity almost anything that is wrong, adheres stedfastly to what is right; when he who has the means to command every indulgence is temperate and self-denying; when he to whom every infirmity of temper would be forgiven is patient and gentle; when he who can make speedy amends for any injustice committed under the temptation of the moment, commits none; when he who has had no education of suffering is pitying to others; when he who might perform almost every duty by proxy, chooses to perform them in person.

The old man's walks in this life lead him little in the way of courts; but she who sits upon a pinnacle is seen in a certain manner, even by those upon the distant plain; and never are the

weekly prayers repeated in her behalf but he feels the justice of thus calling down the blessings of a higher assistance for one, whose virtues, not forced upon her, as it were, by external circumstance—as in so great a degree is the case with us all—must find their sole source in her own righteous and determined heart. Whose faults, not repressed by the harsh influences from without, must be eradicated by her own firm and courageous will.

Duty thus fulfilled deserves what it meets with, —the love and esteem of a vast nation's heart, and the animating and never-dying voice of historic applause.

But to return to one who, in her lofty sphere had fulfilled all the duties of Christian wife, mother, daughter, sister, and friend; whose charities had been wide as her influence; whose love unbounded; whose industry, energy, and application untiring; with whom each day was as a branch of life's tree, producing noble fruit; and who now, loaded with the well-earned honours of a well-spent life, stood there, bending under the weight of years, and gradually sinking to that

final decay which spares not the fairest or the best.

I happened, little as it is my lot to associate with the great ones of this world, to have been during my own long life placed in circumstances which had enabled me to watch the course of her's. She was some score years, however, older than myself; for the events I relate took place some thirty years ago. But as a child, a boy, a youth, a man, that woman, that Duchess, had been known to me. She was, as it was natural she should be, the cynosure of our neighbourhood. I was a young child when, beautiful as the day, adorned with all her bridal splendour, with eyes that seemed to my young fancy like twin stars, face as of an angel, form and gestures that were grace itself, I first beheld that fair and youthful creature, then just wedded to our Duke.

I remember my father, whose qualities rendered him ever a favourite, and always at home in such societies, taking me up to her landau, as she sat upon the race-course, surrounded by admiring men of rank and fashion, with three other beautiful

young ladies—but, ah! how inferior I thought—in the carriage with her. I was an only son, and a favourite,—and she knew it, and had asked for the little boy; and I was lifted up in my father's arms. She could not reach to kiss me, as I hoped she would, but she stretched out a lily-white hand all sparkling with jewels, and patted my proud and glowing cheek.

That same day, too, I saw her standing in the grand stand. I thought she looked as Romeo says Juliet looked,

> Like some heaven-starred messenger
> When he bestrides the bosom of the clouds.

I never shall forget the resplendent loveliness of that face and figure. Children are great admirers of beauty, and the pictures impressed upon their memory as children, they retain, and dwell upon with the riper judgment of advancing years. Years have not taught me to lower my admiration for that picture, but to wonder how it is that loveliness so exquisite seems now no longer to belong to our social life.

The Duke stood by her,—I recollect him, too. He was not to be compared to his fair partner in point of personal beauty, yet have I seldom seen such an engaging-looking person: his figure was manly, well knit, and well sized; his face handsome enough; his manners polished, but plain; but there was a something so simple, so truthful, so honest,—if I may use the word,—so thoroughly English,—all that English should be,—that it was impossible to look upon him and not to love him.

This sweet creature was fortunate; but how many in her rank have been thus fortunate also, and yet have thrown the rich treasure away. Exchanging domestic love for the empty triumphs of worldly admiration, or for the wicked and forbidden pleasure of ensnaring other hearts.

But not of such was my charmer.

She loved her husband: she believed in, and honoured her God: she understood his law, and with all the force of her strong and pure and righteous heart, that law she strove to fulfil. She

bore her husband six children, to whom no mother was more tender, about whom no mother more solicitous. She spared not fatigue nor exertion, nor even privation in their cause. She has laid upon a mattress upon the floor, whilst her children in the hooping-cough were suffering round her. She has sat up wearied and faint to support their sinking heads. Hard did she labour to instil into them the principles which guided her own life; but less happy in her children, than in her husband, these efforts were not altogether successful.

She was doomed to be an instance of that inexplicable failure, which sometimes disappoints the best directed efforts. The temptations of rank and fortune, which had been powerless over her own character, proved too strong for theirs. She had to weep over the grave of some delicate, frail, and tender, who grew up to resemble herself; to weep far bitterer tears over the indifference, the heartlessness, the contradictions of those who lived and gave themselves to the world. The sorrows of the mother she bore with fortitude and resignation, when they came from the hand

of God; with patience, candour, temper, judgment, when those harsher ones assailed her, which proceed from the errors of man.

Her children left the parental home early: the sons to plunge into all the dissipations of fashionable life;—the daughters to make splendid marriages. They rushed into the world, and the tender sedulous trainings, and the gentle teachings, and the earnest exhortations, the piety she had so unremittingly endeavoured to instil, the high principles to inculcate, were alike forgotten.

It was bitter to find her gentle remonstrances—her kind advice and counsel—her fond and anxious warnings alike disregarded—her fine judgment in things, her experience, her love, valueless and of no avail. Many in such cases have yielded to the pain that agonizes the disappointed mother's heart, when thus the years of ceaseless care—of painful self-sacrifice—the years of youth and childhood, close. Many have discarded from their hearts the ungrateful children who thus return a mother's generous love;—but she was made of better stuff.

Her patience—the candour with which she judged—the readiness with which she forgave—the noble, generous love with which there she sat aside, waiting in hope that *would* not be destroyed, a return to better things—waiting in affection that *would* not fail, the hour when sorrow, difficulty, perplexity, or distress, would send them back to her arms, exceeds my power to describe.

She waited not entirely in vain. Her influence was in some degree restored, as her help might be needed. She exercised it for the benefit of every creature who suffered themselves to yield to its power.

She had a hard trial too in her husband—the beloved of her soul. They had not been married half-a-dozen years, before a fall from his horse in hunting—a blow upon the head, unsettled that fine machinery upon which intellectual, and still more mysteriously, even moral health in some degree depends.

The Duke did not become absolutely incapacitated, but his fine intellect was weakened; that prospect of taking a forward part in political life,

for which his gifts had so admirably fitted him, and to which she looked forward with so much pride, was at an end.

The promising young man henceforward was only fit for his own domestic circle and that of intimate friends. His nerves, too, were deranged; his temper, poor fellow, in spite of all his endeavours, too often irritable; his power of exciting love seemed diminished, as his dependance upon the love of others increased.

He would have exhausted the affection and patience of many a wife, but her's was inexhaustible. Divine pity succeeded to delighted admiration—tenderness supplied the place of rapturous joy.

He was, however, fully sensible of all this devotion. The recompense of her fervid attachment was not denied. He died in her arms, blessing her with words whilst voice was left, commending her to that God who could alone reward her, recompensing her by the ineffable tenderness which filled his eyes, till death drew the impenetrable veil between them.

He left her a lovely widow,—and a widow she remained. The highest offers in the land—fortune, fame, splendour, worth, and intellect, were at her feet; but her heart was in the grave with her first and only love, and she remained alone.

And now she is sinking slowly into years. The well-spent day is coming to a close, and the shades of night are drawing on.

The active spirit no longer urges to exertion; that frame of healthful symmetry, formed, as it should seem, for action, has lost its power. The golden bowl is breaking, the wheel at the cistern abates its swift motion. She feels the necessity for rest, and she has earned a right to it.

I used to be more struck with the way she took this change, than with any other period of this beautiful life.

She, who used to be so active, and was never to be seen unemployed, who, when not engaged in the discharge of some duty, seemed to find such delight in the cultivation of one of the finest intellects I ever met with;—she, who was to be

seen reading, writing, discoursing in her animated way, in full enjoyment of the rare society she assembled about her, drinking in knowledge with the healthy eagerness of a fine mind;—she, the soul of every society in which she bore a part—the delighted reader of every new and interesting book; whose stores of knowledge exercised every day, as did her faculty for imparting it—this animated, ardent creature might now be seen quiet and unemployed, reposing in her arm-chair, most often a listener to what was going on—rarely a speaker; and when she spoke, not with the garrulity of age, but with the brevity of one, whom long experience had made wise.

She read very little now; and when I used to offer to read to her some of those new works with which the world of the day is most often occupied, she would in general decline it.

I remember her thanking me one day for not being weary of repeating my offers in this way; but she told me, that she found her powers of attention were so much diminished, that nothing but what was light and trifling could be received

into her mind without a painful and wearying effort.

"I have perceived this incapacity growing upon me for some time. I was very much mortified at first, and resolved by no means to yield to it. I persisted in reading as much as usual, but I found I could no longer do it and do right. The ideas confused, instead of enlarging my understanding; the occupation exhausted, instead of refreshing my spirits; that became painful which used to be the recreation of my leisure hours, and unfitted, instead of preparing me for what was yet to be done. I am of great age now; few are allowed to attain to such an age, but those who look forward to it may do it with peaceful hope. This incapacity, which to your young mind, my friend, appears so grievous, is but to life what the repose of the evening is to a hard-spent day. We enjoy sitting still. My mind is not altogether an unfurnished chamber," added she, gently, "and my heart teems with tender memories. The anguish which attends the thinking of those we loved so dearly, and who

are gone hence, I feel no more. I am so near the grave that I can think of those who are already upon the other side of it, with something of the pleasure with which one anticipates the return of a long absent friend after a wearying separation in some distant country—whom one has not yet received, but whom one certainly soon shall."

One interest, indeed, was still lively as ever, the interest which was excited by Flavia. There were active duties still to be performed for Flavia, and it was in order to be enabled to discharge these well, that this admirable person hoarded so carefully the little strength that was left; gave so much time to quiet meditative repose, and refused herself the now too exhausting amusement of the mind.

In this beloved grandchild the aged woman found a compensation for many disappointments. She loved and was interested in all her grandchildren, but she had little to do with any of them except Flavia and Lord George, who had both by circumstances been thrown almost

altogether under her care. She loved Lord George with all her heart. There is something in the petulant gaiety of a lively, thoughtless, but very well-disposed youth, that is particularly delightful to old age, especially as when, in this case, he is most affectionately attached on his side. Lord George loved his grandmother with all his heart, and truly, as a matter of individual taste and preference. This was a sweet drop in her cup. Wherever he went, with whomsoever he had been, he never seemed sorry to come back to her. He was always gay, full of spirits and fun, when at home with her; had always abundance to tell her, opened his heart to her, made her the confidant of all his faults and follies; and no laugh seemed to sound sweeter in his ears than that with which she greeted his lively sallies. The old lady and the young spark of fashion were the dearest friends in the world.

But the sentiment inspired by Flavia was of a far more earnest and deeper character. The lovely little girl,—who had been one of those delightful children that seem born to gladden the

eyes and excite the admiration of every one,—had ripened into the gay, sweet-tempered, easy, affectionate young thing, in whom few suspect the latent qualities which all this almost childish grace and beauty covered. But the Duchess, amid all the enchantments of the charming trifler, had early detected the qualities that lay concealed: the firmness of purpose, the soundness of understanding, the deep devotion and power of love. She prized this treasure almost the more dearly, because she felt as if it was a possession almost confined to herself. They were hidden perfections, by few but herself appreciated; a hoard of bliss, in which no one seemed to share.

Flavia loved the Duchess as no one else—much as all loved her—could love her. The rest loved her for many reasons, and according to their power of loving. Flavia was capable of estimating the full value of that to which she was so tenderly attached. It requires a certain sympathy before the full beauty of some characters can be even perceived.

And now they are sitting together after the day of the yacht party.

The Duchess, fatigued by the exertion, is leaning backward in her arm-chair, her feet upon a footstool; upon which Flavia sits, and holds her hand, and prattles, as is her wont, to this dearest friend, commenting upon the characters and the events which have made up the history of the last day.

CHAPTER VIII.

Wilt thou adjure to guide the heavenly car,
And with thy daring folly burn the world?
Wilt thou reach stars, because they shine on thee?

SHAKESPEARE.

"I DON'T like that Mr. Wilmington—I cannot like him. Don't think, dear madam, it is because he is vulgar, which he certainly is, and I think in the most repulsive form of vulgarity,—that which is fine and flashy; but there is something false in that face: it is excessively handsome and smiling, and all that; but it is false."

"Not false in one thing at least, I believe, Flavia. It promises good nature and indulgence; and I have heard its promises are performed. He

has been a kind husband, and a very indulgent father: he denies his children nothing."

"I believe so; and yet he does not make his children—one of them at least—happy. That is evident to me, in Harry Wilmington's case. As for Caroline, she has so much strength of character, that her happiness seems to depend upon herself. No, indeed, grandmamma, I cannot abide Mr. Wilmington. What a fuss he made yesterday!—So full of the part of host he had to play; so obsequious, yet so vain. Do you know, dear grandmamma, there is a certain sort of fine and rather sharp-featured, thin-lipped, smiling, handsome face, particularly when united to a tall, elegant, slender figure, that is my abomination."

"And do you know, dear Flavia, if there is a thing which I cannot endure, it is to go and receive a person's hospitality, and then come home and criticise his manner. I would rather at any other time in the year have heard your remarks upon Mr. Wilmington."

"Which, after all, grandmamma, you think just. Come, confess that you do, dearest granny."

"No," said the old lady; "I have tasted of his bread and salt."

"Do you like Caroline and Harry, grandmamma? You have not seen much of either of them; but you observe with half an eye. As I may not discuss the one we can neither of us praise,—for I know you think me right in what I say,—let us talk of those we cannot praise too much."

"Cannot praise too much!—I grant you that Caroline is very charming—a delightful person—but her brother! I confess I rather wonder at my sweet Flavia,—who, whether she can see with half an eye or not, has two very good ones in her head,—I confess I rather wonder my sweet Flavia can find no defect in that young man."

"Grandmamma, there are defects I do care for, and defects I don't care for. I would rather a man was awkward than flashy—too shy than too assured—reserved than forward—humble than self-sufficient. I dislike the defects of the father; I care not for those of the son. But that is, I believe, because—wrongly or rightly—I associate truth, honesty, delicacy, sensibility with one set

of defects, and shallowness, falseness, insincerity, want of delicacy, and coarseness of feeling with the other."

The Duchess fondly stroked her hand over the head of her favourite.

"Besides, Harry is not happy—I am sure he is not; and Mr. Wilmington seems careering down life with his sails swelled by a full gale of prosperity. I never saw any man apparently so well satisfied with himself and all that belongs to him,—another mark, I think, of dulness of perception and want of feeling. Except, I may say, as respects his son: he holds him cheap enough, I can see that; because, forsooth, he is not so handsome as his showy self. And then Harry has so much sensibility, that this depresses him in his own opinion—I can see it does; and there, I own Harry is not to be praised."

"You talked a good deal with him, I saw, my dear. Had you seen much of him during your last visit to Caroline? You did not tell me much about him."

"No; I met him only once or twice. But I saw enough to make me aware of this, and to

make me feel vexed and sorry for him. I cannot endure to see merit depressed by the arrogance and assumption of *de*merit. It seems to me often to happen in this world,—the worser holding down the better, and that merely from the want of the very qualities to which the better owes its superiority. It always makes me fly to arms; I long to assert that better cause; I feel interested and engaged in this manner more than I can say."

"My dear female Quixote, take care what you are about," said the Duchess gently; "a young man——"

"Oh!" said Flavia, laughing, "I quite forget he is a young man. One never looks upon Harry as one does upon other young men. I never feel ashamed of praising *him;* I could do it to his face. He is not the least like other young men."

"Not very like dear George, certainly," remarked the grandmother, evidently pleased with this last speech.

She was not quite so well pleased with the rest.

"Lord George like *him!* Goodness, how different they are!"

"George has certainly not had the advantage of being bound down by the arrogance of *de*merit," said the Duchess. "We have all spoiled him more than enough; yet he is a dear fellow. He has resisted the ill effects of boundless indulgence wonderfully; he is a dear fellow—time and experience will make him all we can wish."

It was now Flavia's turn to be silent. She made no remark upon this eulogy, but sat there at her grandmother's feet, musing. At last she said:

"I wonder whether Mr. Wilmington is really so excessively rich as everybody says he is. What an immensity of money he seems to spend!"

"There seems no reason to doubt his wealth, dear Flavia; I never heard it questioned, and I should be sorry indeed to question it. To a man engaged in commerce, even the idle expression of a doubt may be an injury, a blight, a check—the small beginning of ruin. Pray, my love, do not let your dislike to Mr. Wilmington's somewhat too obsequious smiles lead you to hint at

anything of this kind. You do not know the mischief you might do."

"Thank you, dear granny, for putting me upon my guard. I will take care, I assure you, not to give any one but yourself the benefit of my speculations; but as we are quite alone, I may venture to say, that I don't think Mr. Wilmington *is* so very, very rich as he pretends, or at least appears to be; not exactly intending to impose upon anybody—for I think he is above that—but his expenses seem enormous. He never denies himself anything; and yet I could fancy sometimes that he was vexed about money. And then that poor dear Mrs. Wilmington is such a helpless being! You cannot conceive, grandmamma, what a cypher she is in her family—and yet an expensive cypher in her way. And I must own Mr. Wilmington spares nothing upon her—nor, indeed, upon his children either; but the whole is managed in so different a manner from what things are here. There is no order, no system, no plan, no discipline. Poor Mrs. Wilmington is forced to leave everything to her housekeeper; and Mr. Wilmington is completely in the hands of his

butler, who is, to tell the truth, a still finer gentleman than himself. The butler, he seems to think—because he once lived with Lord somebody or other—must understand things better than even he himself does; so the man has it all his own way. I have seen Caroline and Harry look annoyed about it; but Mrs. Wilmington is too poorly to be troubled with such things. If I were a wife and a mother, I think I would hold the reins, though I were dying, rather than abandon them to such dependants."

"Happily, my little love, you have never known what it is to feel dying—which that suffering creature feels, I believe, every day of her life; but I agree with you. I wish she could make more exertion, however painful, for I believe it would be better for her, and for all; but in some things she has played her part well: she has been sedulous in bringing up her children; and many of the good qualities you attribute to your favourites, are owing to her care. But do you know, my love, though I checked you at first in the expression of them, your remarks have set me thinking?"

She, in fact, mused for a short time; and her

reflections were upon the subject of Flavia. There was something in the young girl's manner of speaking of Harry Wilmington, which had, for the first time in her life, suggested the thought, that, in spite of his disadvantages, he might have formed for himself some interest in her heart, though she could hardly think it possible that he could prove a serious rival to Lord George. As little had it ever suggested itself to her mind before, that Harry might not inherit that immense wealth upon the death of his father, for which the world gave him credit. The two ideas now presented came very disagreeably together. A slight apprehension that Flavia might some time or other entertain a decided preference for Harry, agreed ill with the doubt as to Harry's prospects.

Now, though the Duchess was disinterested, and had no desire to make an ambitious match for her favourite—which, indeed, was manifest, by her partiality for the idea of Lord George—yet if Lord George were to be superseded, it ought to be by some person at least entitled from his rank or fortune to put in a claim. She felt as if she should be much to blame, if she allowed a prefer-

ence, which now amounted only to a slight partiality, to ripen into more serious feelings—if there was any doubt as to the stability of that fortune upon which Harry's position in society depended.

"You have made me uncomfortable, Flavia," at last she said.

"How, dearest grandmamma? I hope not by what I have been saying. I chatter to you,—you have always allowed it,—of everything that comes into my head. I don't know how I came to talk so much of the Wilmingtons. I am sure I don't care if Mr. Wilmington went smash to-morrow, as far as he is concerned; but for Caroline and Harry, it would be a shocking thing to be sure; but I don't fear that. Only when people talk of Harry Wilmington having some time or other such an immense fortune, all I can say is, that I very much doubt it."

"You think a great deal about him and his prospects, it seems to me, my dear."

"Do I? No, I don't think I do. I don't know why I have talked about them so much to-day. But I am so tired and good for nothing with

the yachting yesterday; yet it was a beautiful scene. But I will try to find something to do."

She rose, and went to her pianoforte.

But the pianoforte seemed out of tune. She could neither sing nor play to please herself. She took a book; but the book did not interest her.

She sat down to her embroidery-frame. This did better; as her needle went in and out, her thoughts could wander where they would without injury to her employment.

The young people met frequently. The place they were at was one of those bathing-places where there is nothing to be seen or done except upon the sea-shore, or upon some esplanade, pier, or public walk.

The weather was warm and delightful,—a season to spend one's life out of doors. The mother and the grandmother were much confined by their infirmities to their several houses. The young

people went out by themselves; that is, in a party together. They mostly paraded up and down the esplanade, in front of the row of lodging-houses; and the mother and grandmother, from their respective windows, looked out, and served in a manner as chaperons.

The young ones might be seen, all five together, walking up and down; while the sea breezes played in their hair and garments, and the bright sun shone upon the sparkling waters, enjoying the sweetness of the air, the freshness of young spirits, and that easy intercourse which renders society so charming to youth.

Caroline and Flavia went arm-in-arm, Selwyn and Lord George beside them, and Harry rather thrown out,—sometimes behind, sometimes upon the extreme left, walking in a musing mood, whilst the others were chatting gaily away.

The Duchess, as she watched the group, felt the slight anxiety which had been awakened upon Flavia's account diminish. There certainly seemed no disposition upon the young man's part to make any pretension to her especial notice, and she seemed as gay and happy as possible without

his attentions. Moreover, Lord George always came in after these friendly promenades in exuberant spirits.

Harry it was certain grew more grave and silent than ever. Anxiety and care, and grief, that bitter foe to love, were in his heart. He usually walked a little apart when the rest were gaily chatting together, listening to that voice which was to his ear such sweet music, and, poor, imprudent fellow, suffering himself to dwell upon attractions already far too powerful for his peace,—in utter hopelessness; for the idea of attempting to excite an answering feeling in her breast never crossed his mind as a possibility.

He was accustomed to suffer, and little of a calculator as to what was good for himself. The indifference to his own happiness amounted almost to a fault. In this case he was entirely regardless as to the risk he was running, and, indeed, to tell the truth, he felt that he had little happiness to risk.

I don't think he was at this time much annoyed by the presence of Lord George. He had been accustomed for so many years to look upon Flavia

as some way or other set apart for that favourite of fortune, that the idea had become habitual to him, and made a part in all future prospects.

He was happy to be allowed to enjoy so much of her society in this way; he had never imagined the possibility of enjoying more.

The day spent on board the yacht remained in his heart and memory as a day set apart—a day quite distinct from any other day of his existence —a day in which he had been really and almost perfectly happy: it left the sweetest recollections behind it—recollections upon which the heart can feed with ever new delight.

Whilst Flavia prattled, Caroline and Selwyn conversed, and Lord George rattled away. The silent and meditative youth, amid many painful causes for reflection, was soothed by the remembrance of words and looks that consoled, and animated him forwards in the path he thought pointed out for him.

His path of duty he began to believe would lie in ways the most irksome to his tastes—the most in contradiction with his ideas of happiness—the sacrifices which it demanded would be immense,

nothing less than that of all his dearest tastes and inclinations. And yet, the sacrifice would be never appreciated, never even guessed by any of those who surrounded him. The course which it cost him such an heroic effort to determine upon, was so exactly that which, according to the common routine of life, most young men pursued, that the cost it would demand in his particular case would never even be divined.

Flavia would never know what he had done, for the sake of what he thought right; that sweetest reward, her approbation, would never attend the effort. He knew how precious a recompense it was, for he had tasted it once. It had fallen unexpectedly as the rich repayment of one good deed, which had been to him so easy, that he felt there was not the slightest merit in it; and now he cherished a tender and delicate pride in the thought of dedicating to her, as it were, in secret, an act of self-immolation, which would cost him so many struggles, and which he felt to include no less than the sacrifice of his life.

The state of his mother's health also added

much to his present seriousness. He seemed to be more aware than his father, or even Caroline, of the increasing weakness which slowly gained ground upon her. Every day he fancied he saw her losing something of the little strength and energy she had possessed. Caroline, who was with her almost every hour, did not so much perceive this. It is a very common effect of being continually with an invalid of this description.

The son and the mother had many conversations together. She spoke to him of her approaching death. She had expected her death so often; for so many years she had suffered from that terror of speedy death which is one painful symptom of her malady, that the feeling had ceased to excite attention in those around her. She knew she was not believed, and she ceased to express the apprehension.

But Harry, she felt, still would listen to her; and to him she said that she had so often most involuntarily and unwittingly been frightened about herself, that she did not wonder no one was alarmed. "But this time, my boy, I feel

that it will not be as it has been before; I shall not be long with my son.

"Harry, I have been a poor inefficient wife and mother, now I look back upon my life, and recollect how little I have done; I feel that I ought and could have done more. The distressing sense of languor to which I have yielded, was, I know, a most incapacitating feeling; but this does not satisfy my conscience, as the certainty of absolute want of power would have done. It would have been very painful, very laborious for me to have performed what requires a very simple exertion upon the part of others; but I could have done it if I had had the courage to bear weariness, and pain and resist the love of that quiet in which alone I found existence comfortable.

"I did not sufficiently reflect upon the duty of self-inflicted pain. I had been brought up in a somewhat imperfect view of duty, and accustomed too much to think that, provided no positive injury was inflicted by it, self-indulgence was a slight fault in myself or any one; and therefore I had never been disciplined, nor had I attempted to discipline myself to endurance and self-denial.

Such things were looked upon by those who had the charge of my education as superstitious notions. Everybody was to be as happy as they could—not as useful as they could, according to that system.

"Not to inflict pain, not to diminish the happiness of others, we *were* taught; but the necessity of exertion in order to secure the welfare of others, was not insisted upon;—the necessity of preparing ourselves by early habit to play a useful and efficient part in such a world as this, by the practice of a somewhat severe self-discipline, never once thought of.

"I avoided exertions, because they were so painful—exertions, which it would have been in my power to make, could I have brought myself to despise the pain. Ah! Harry, where should I be now, if One had not despised pain for me?"

"Dearest of mothers, how can you talk so?" said her son, tenderly. "So suffering as your life has been, how can you reproach yourself for not having done what you were so little equal to do?"

"The power was in me—my conscience tells

me so now—if I had resolutely determined to use it. But whether in my power or not, the evil has been the same. Excuses, or even just reasons, for the thing being left undone, do not *do* it.

"My dear boy," looking at him with an anxious melancholy expression, "that is a fearful text for a parent's heart, 'the sins of the parents are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation.' My Harry, what a prospect lies before me! —I think I see our sins visited upon you."

"Dear mother, do not give way to such—forgive the expression—morbid feelings. Sins! How can you talk of sins in a course so innocent as yours—and, I may add—my father's? If he is fond of the world, is it not natural—formed to shine in it as he is?"

"Alas! my own, how differently do things appear to those who have arrived at that point where I stand now—upon the threshold of another world. What vain shadows do the distinctions, and the vanities, and the fluctuating pleasures of this world appear! Sins! I have learned too late how heavy are the sins of omission." Thus she lamented herself.

An impartial observer might have detected the latent weakness of her character even in these continued lamentations over her own short-comings. Not in the regret for wasted time—for what could be more just than such feelings?—but in the manner in which she expressed her regrets,—thus helplessly dwelling upon a painful subject, She did not, however, entirely give her time and thoughts to these feelings. During the few months which she lived after this time, she took every opportunity of talking seriously to her son.

She still adhered to her principle of not endeavouring to open the eyes of her children to their father's faults, to which, except in the above slight instance, she had never alluded. But her eye cleared to the perception of the vanity of worldly things; she more clearly perceived those errors in character, which her partiality had hitherto concealed.

She could not hide from herself the truth, that Mr. Wilmington, in spite of all his apparent good nature, was a mere thoughtless, extravagant, self-indulged spendthrift,—vain of his wealth, and proud of displaying it in every form of extrava-

gance,—averse to business, and detesting unpleasant tasks,—sedulously luxurious and ostentatious in his habits,—and one, whose sole aim in life, it seemed to be, to outshine others of his own rank, rival those of a rank above him.

During the last half-year of her tedious indisposition, though he had never ceased to be kind in his manner and purpose, nay, in providing the means for her comfort and amusement, yet she could not but perceive, that the melancholy of a sick-room—the dismal prospect of approaching death, was more than he could submit to. Anything so repugnant to his feelings and disagreeable, he could not bring himself to endure. To a man with so little real tenderness of heart, nothing is so uninteresting and annoying as a sick-room. It was a dangerous habit of Mr. Wilmington to fancy that neglected duty was to be atoned for by calling upon his purse. He felt that he was less with his wife than he ought to be, and he therefore was boundless in the expense he incurred on her account, and often in the most useless manner. A few words of real tenderness would have done more for her than all the expensive

delicacies he purchased. She knew he spent much of his time with his friend, the dashing Mrs. Emerson; and she heard of her beautiful daughter;—and she looked at Caroline and sighed.

Caroline, however, as yet was young and unsuspicious; she little imagined what anticipation it was which clouded the last sad hours of the wife and mother. The idea of this sort of prospective attachment never entered her head. Young creatures at her age, if rightly-minded, are incapable of suspecting in others what would be so offensive to their feelings of loyalty, decency, and tenderness.

In her conversations with Henry, the mother never alluded in the remotest manner to that subject; but she did to another—his father's circumstances. Her eye, as I have said, purified by the near approach of death, she began to perceive that the lavish extravagance in which she had been content to share, was not only wrong, but possibly dangerous. She recollected her husband's irregularity in his accounts, and entire want of system or arrangement in his expenditure,

—his dislike to business—his long absences from town upon the most trivial causes; and she saw before her the faces of his two partners.

Estcourt, with that sharp satirical eye, that cynical face, those cold quiet, manners, so exactly the reverse of those of her gay, thoughtless husband; and Jones, that sturdy, stolid, steady, man of pounds and pence, devoted heart and soul to the sole object of acquiring wealth, and who never missed an opportunity or scrupled at taking an advantage. And then she recollected with a sigh, that the only real friend her husband possessed in the world, Mr. Craiglethorpe, was far away in the East Indies. He had been there, indeed, for many years, during which her husband's habits of inattention and carelessness of expense had considerably increased.

These thoughts and anxieties, not in a clear, distinct, courageous, truthful manner, but half and half—irresolutely, hesitatingly,—saying little, implying much—doubting of her own impressions one time, full of cruel conviction at another,—she infused into Harry's mind.

It was a wretched state into which she threw

him by this want of courage and sincerity; he did not like to interrogate her upon subjects, from the consideration of which she seemed to shrink with so much pain; yet the most distressing doubts began to perplex him.

These conversations, however, it was, which first directed his attention to the state of his father's fortune; for the great expense at which he lived had been from infancy such a matter of course, that it had never entered into the boy's head to doubt the abundance of means from which effects so copious without intermission flowed.

There arose a painful inquiry as to what duty demanded on his part. The wish of his whole life had been to travel. He had a hunger after information—that rational and praiseworthy thirst of the soul which had become with him an almost irresistible desire; and Selwyn and he had planned a tour over Europe and in the East, which was to occupy two or three years—years which, how could either of them better employ? The health of Selwyn, they both flattered themselves, would improve whilst travelling; and as they could afford to spend abundance of time as well as money,

they were to proceed as leisurely as consideration upon that head might demand. Harry felt, and felt justly, that nothing would be of so much service to him in assisting him to overcome his constitutional defects, as thus mingling with men of all descriptions, and exposing himself to every variety of circumstance. Everything had been arranged between them for years; it had been their ultimate purpose from boyhood, the termination of one act of their lives, to which they looked forward with the highest satisfaction.

The plan had been delayed upon account of the state of his mother's health: it was plain that she could not have borne the separation; the subject, therefore, out of tenderness for her infirmity, had never been mentioned to her. She was, therefore, not in the least aware of the sacrifice she was exacting from her son, when she entreated him to remain near his father, and assist him in the management of his affairs; making the request with an earnestness he found quite irresistible, without, however, fully explaining her reasons. He could not withhold from a mother, in such a state, the promise she almost dragged from him,

not to leave his father, and yet, at the very moment he was making it, he doubted whether the sacrifice of all his dearest inclinations was founded upon any rational good, or merely demanded by her sickly and exaggerated terrors. However, the sacrifice was made: Selwyn started upon his travels alone,—Harry remained with his family.

It was a melancholy parting.

The poor sufferer died in doubt, irresolution, and ill-defined terrors, as she had lived.

She was a believer without a strengthening faith; amiable and affectionate without self-devotion and courage; sensible of her defects, repentant, and contrite, without power to correct or effort to amend.

Her life had been like a confused skein of delicate and valuable thread, tangled for want of careful development. She came to the end of it, and all was still confusion and all useless in

spite of its adaptation to so many fine purposes:—

Non ragionàm più, ma guardam e passa.

And may those in danger of the same waste of existence, for want of courage to meet its demands, and defy its pains,—and they are many—pause upon the slight sketch of this ineffectual character. Forbear to sigh, for sighs are weakness, but brace up the feeble knees, and endeavour to amend.

She died.

Her children shed many pious tears over the helpless form that lay before them, scarcely less helpless than it had actually been in life; but they were not of those to recall the errors and frailties of the sacred dead, for which the poor mute clay can no longer plead excuse or offer explanation.

They wept her tenderly, but the trace she had left in life was not deep. Things resumed their course in a few months, and the stream of time closed over her.

Mr. Wilmington shed a few tears, ordered a splendid funeral, put his servants into the very

deepest mourning, lined his large pompous pew with black, shut himself up for a few weeks, and then came out into the world, looking remarkably well in his mourning, which necessarily corrected his too showy taste in matters of dress, and was soon immersed in the round of those pleasures which in the great city attend upon wealth and liberty. Henry sighed, and returned to the counting-house, where at least one satisfaction awaited him,—a gradually growing conviction that it was right he should be there.

Caroline was installed as the head of her father's establishment, which she soon began to manage with an intelligence, firmness, and attention to order and system hitherto little known there.

After the long reign of misrule, you will easily believe that it required a rare amount of activity, courage, and perseverance, to subdue ill-governed and insubordinate domestics to obedience, and bring a boundless expenditure of money within the limits of a liberal and judicious economy. But girls of eighteen or nineteen, which was now Caroline's age, are often gifted with a native

genius and capacity, and possessed of a spirit and energy which enables them to produce astonishing effects; and Caroline was quite equal to her task. To be sure, the difficulty was very much diminished, and the effort rendered delightful by her father's partiality. His esteem and admiration for his fine sensible girl was the best thing about him. He bore that from her which he would have borne from no other living being; for she was temperate and mild, though plain and sincere. He suffered the expenses of his household to be controlled; he turned a deaf ear to the complaints of his servants; he even accepted the resignation of that butler, of whose skill in the direction of his table he had felt so vain; and he suffered Caroline to persuade him into a variety of wise and reasonable measures. Reason was so persuasive from her lips.

This affection was a great encouragement and a source of much happiness to her. Even his very weaknesses rendered Mr. Wilmington dear to his daughter. We naturally love those who suffer us to guide them to their good.

Caroline loved her father more dearly than she

could possibly have loved such a character under any other relation of life—a character which indeed, but for this relation, never could have interested her in the least.

Three or four years were spent in this manner: and thus ends this first part or preface to my story. And I must now beg you to suppose these three or four years over,—and, if I have succeeded in the least degree in interesting you in the fate of a man I loved so dearly and esteemed so truly as I did Henry Wilmington,—to accompany me through the remainder of his history.

END OF PART I.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

She was so expensive, that the income of three Dukes was not enough to supply her extravagance.—ARBUTHNOT.

IN a spacious and very splendidly furnished drawing-room two ladies were sitting together.

The scene was in itself a picture. Such a picture, however, as any of those dwellings might present, which, belonging to, I may say, the almost innumerable possessors of great mercantile wealth, cover the face of our land. The chamber

was so large, and so lofty, as to merit the old-fashioned but imposing name of saloon. It was beautifully proportioned, and was terminated at one end by a fine oriel window of magnificent dimensions, which opened upon a richly-trellissed balcony, now hung and festooned with creeping plants. The large purple and the lovely white clematis, honeysuckles, fragrant and of various hues, and lovely trailing roses,—pink, crimson, yellow, white,—all mingling delightfully together, and forming a charming arch of flowers and verdure, over the rare and costly exotics with which the balcony was filled.

Beyond this beautiful trellis-work the eye fell upon a beautiful garden, inclosed by fine shrubberies, cultivated and growing in the finest luxuriance. The well-known plants, long the ornament of our gardens, being mingled most pleasingly with many scarcely acclimated strangers. The delicate feathery pines, the dark and almost sublime araucarias, the sweetly-tinted berberris, and others of those delightful new-comers,

to the list of which every year seems to add some new treasure.

The lawn fell from the windows to the river. The Thames flowed at its feet, with that rapidity which gives such an agreeable promise of healthy and changing airs; whilst the almost crystal waters ripple forwards, and bathe the base of this gently-falling bank of close and emerald grass, seeming like velvet to the eye and foot. Upon its borders a few noble and ancient willows, of immense size were growing, waving their light tresses in the breeze, and seeming to bend and kiss the shining waters. Nearer the house the lawn was disposed in flower-beds, completely filled with flowers,—beautiful, rich, gorgeous.

The day was extremely warm but perfectly dry, and as the breeze came softly playing from the river, it lifted the tendrils of the woodbine and the pendent roses, and wafted softly up and down the light folds of the embroidered muslin-curtains, which fell in ample folds from the cornice above,

and softened the effect of the splendid brocatelle of which the more important curtains were composed.

Nothing could be more perfectly beautiful, more in harmony with all that the most lively imagination, or the most delicate taste could demand, than the scene without. The scene within was perhaps less in harmony with such demands. And yet it was impossible not to admire.

Nothing could be well imagined more rich, more perfect in design, more charming in disposition of colours, than the furnishing of this apartment. The deep tone of the brocatelle, by its subdued warmth, kept down in some degree the profusion of ornamental furniture and of gilding and colouring which surrounded you. For the variety of chairs, sofas, causeuses, footstools, was countless; so were the tables, of rich inlaid woods, and of rare beauty of design. The consoles and étagères covered with all sorts of expensive things,—old china, old jewels, morsels of rare, curious Venice glass, and vases filled with

beautiful flowers. The walls were hung with very tolerable pictures; whilst vast mirrors, depending from the ceiling to the floor, seemed to multiply interminably all these fine things.

It was afternoon, and the declining sun penetrated beneath the green arches of the trellis-work, and glistened upon what was one of the most splendid objects in the room, namely, a very fine girandole, which hung from the centre, and whose long graceful chains, shimmering like dew-drops, glittered in the bright beams of an unclouded July day.

In this saloon, then, two ladies were sitting: one with whom you have commenced an acquaintance, the other whom I have not had the pleasure of presenting before. The younger lady was, as you know, tall and well formed, and her figure, now fully developed and most finely formed, had something of the serious majesty about it which we associate with our idea of the young Minerva. She was a noble creature, and there was something remarkably pleasing in the simple ease and dignity

with which she stood or moved. Her fair arms were of the finest proportion, her throat, rising like that noble tower celebrated by King Solomon, at once testifying dignity and grace, supported a head of the finest contour, round which an abundance of locks, of so dark a brown as almost approached to black, was drawn with a sort of classical plainness, and confined in a large low knot behind.

The face, however, was not, and never had been, what would be called beautiful. Many people would not admit that it was even handsome; the features were not of that peculiar delicacy of outline which, in my opinion, very often enfeebles the expression; the lines were decisively drawn,—*pronounced*, as the French would say; but the eyes, large, dark, and lustrous, were most beautifully formed, and the dark, short, well-fitted eyelash, spoke of health and strength, as did the clear, well-defined line of the black almost horizontal eyebrow. The mouth was firm, but sweet; the skin a clear, unblemished

olive; the countenance and expression calm, simple, and truthful.

Such was Caroline Wilmington, now in the full bloom of womanhood, as there she sat,—for she did not look like one to lounge in a fauteuil, or recline upon a sofa,—before a table inlaid with some of the rare crimson and dark-brown woods of Sierra Leone, and at this moment covered with various cases of jewels, which now lay open, disclosing their glittering contents before her.

The other figure is the one that you have not yet been introduced to. It formed a striking contrast to that of the fine young creature I have endeavoured to describe. This was that of a small elderly lady,—another of my darling old women,—fat, and all huddled together; not set out and squeezed in by the magic corsets of Gosselin,—as belles of sixty-five or seventy ought to be,—but a sort of confused heap; as if the skeleton of the machine had given way, and all had tumbled together. She was clothed in an unintelligible mass of black modes, nets, laces,

and ribbands, relieved with small accompaniments of white, which white was whiter than the driven snow; and this gave a very picturesque, if not a very modish appearance, to the little pyramid, which was surmounted by a small, withered face, with oddly cut features and lively quick eyes, beaming with a mingled expression of shrewdness and good humour.

The old lady did not at this moment, however, look particularly well pleased, as she was saying,—

"I really wonder at you, niece!"

The old lady, I should have told you, was Mrs. Vernon, Mr. Wilmington's late wife's sister.

"And I really do wonder at you, niece!"

"And why should you, dear aunt?" said Caroline, lifting up her head from a splendid chain of emeralds which she was examining as it lay nestling in its bed of white velvet before her. "Why should you wonder at me, dear aunt?"

"You—to be so occupied with these gewgaws!"

"Dear aunt, I am only anxious to choose what

will be most handsome and most acceptable, where I very sincerely desire to render myself acceptable,—the most pleasing where I very much desire to please," said the young lady.

"I wonder you are anxious about it. For my part, I don't think it is *your* business to please in this case. I hope you will be pleased, that is all. I am sure it is more than I am, or ever shall be ..... ; and then, encouraging all this taste for ostentation and extravagance!—If you *must* make a present, I think you might hit upon something more useful."

The young lady seemed to feel as if there was some justice in this remark; she mused a little while, with her eyes fixed upon the jewels, then she sighed slightly, and said, as if to herself, "Too true!"

"And yet, dear aunt," she went on, "how could I find anything useful? If I knew the thing Lizzy would really want, would it not be my part to remind my father of it? In this case, a gift of that kind from me would be no gift at all. If I

want to give a keepsake it must be of something which, but for me, would not have been had; and it must be something 'rich and rare,' to show my wish to be acceptable,—to show respect, dear aunt, which must be the most acceptable homage I can in this case offer. Then it must be something that will please, that she may be pleased with the donor; and in short, dear aunt, I have but a poor invention, and I could hit upon nothing but some jewels that would answer to my idea of what was best for this occasion."

"It is a very great waste of money,—that is all I have to say," persisted Mrs. Vernon; "and in my opinion it is a very wrong thing to scatter money away. As for Miss Emerson—Lizzy, as you please to call her—your father has taken care to buy her necklaces enough, without your adding to the number. I always considered one handsome necklace enough for any woman, be her condition what it might. *My* mother—"

"Times and fashions alter, dear aunt, you

know—and wants and wishes with them," said Caroline, gently.

"So much the worse,—so much the worse; they don't alter for the better, that I see. All this spending, and frippery, and finery, and nonsense;—Oh! niece! niece! it was better done in my day. City families were content to live in the City, where their fortunes were made. Finsbury-square was good enough for them; and now, Portland-place itself won't do,—and your father must purchase that splendid palace, for I can scarcely call it house, in Belgrave-square;—all to please this fine young lady, I suppose, that is coming among us. Well, those may like her who can—I never shall."

"Indeed, but I hope that you, and all of us, will have reason to like her;—she is good-humoured and obliging, gentle and gay—"

"Extravagant, whimsical, vain, and empty," added Mrs. Vernon. "Oh! Caroline, and will you welcome such a one in your mother's place?"

Caroline's colour rose, and her heart beat for a moment, rapidly.

"My mother!—Oh! aunt, was it not my mother who taught me to endeavour not to sacrifice the present to the past, be that past ever so sacred,—to love mercy better than sacrifice,—not to sacrifice that precious thing, the happiness of another, to our own feelings, however pious, however tender? My father, by the law of God and man, possesses the right to choose again,—he thinks he consults his happiness in doing so; and when doing so, he has not shown himself indifferent to my brother's and my happiness. You know how handsomely, how generously he has behaved to us. He brings no tyrant into his house to infringe upon our household liberty; he has chosen a young creature, with whom it will be our own faults if we do not live at peace. He places her at the head of his family,—she is my father's wife,—as such I will respect, and hope to love her. My mother, in my place, would, I fondly believe, have acted as I shall

endeavour to do;—if conscious still to the affairs of this world, I believe she approves my intentions. I honour her best by endeavouring to form myself by her precepts. Oh! mother—best beloved. . . ."

And here a few tears stole down Caroline's cheek. She wept without any convulsion of the features, the large tears rolled calm and still from her dark eyes. She wept as women of tempered fortitude weep.

Mrs. Vernon was a very excellent woman, in that form of excellence which was the result of the strict but somewhat narrow education of many years ago. She thought justly, but she judged rigidly. She was ready to make every personal sacrifice to duty herself, but she was too fond to impose her own notions of duty upon others. She was sympathetic and kind where she understood the sentiment before her, but she was cold and almost pitiless to sorrow of which she could not appreciate the cause; and what she could not understand was sure to appear to her unreasonable.

She was enthusiastic in her love of the excellence which she comprehended; but some of the finer forms of excellence she did not comprehend. Then she had not a shadow of indulgence for the frailties of our nature. Everything took a positive form with her, for good or for bad. She had not breadth of understanding sufficient to take in the whole of a matter, and strike the balance of equity between contending qualities.

Caroline, as you already know, was of a totally different cast of character; her understanding, originally so strong and clear, was now greatly improved and enlarged by self-cultivation; her high, generous nature could take a widely-extended view of things; and the indulgence and candour of her temper softened in the most beautiful manner the clear decided views taken by this fine young creature.

She had read and thought much—for her sex, it might be said deeply—and she had come to her own conclusions and arrived at very strong convictions upon most subjects. But this never inter-

fered with her indulgent judgment of others: she respected in them the freedom which she exercised herself. In religion more especially this precious quality of candour was most especially to be observed. Her own views upon this most momentous subject were deeply earnest, and her convictions of the truth of such views strong; yet she held in the highest reverence the sincere convictions of others. Perhaps never were the Christian virtues of vital persuasion on the one hand, and respect for Christian sincerity of opinion on the other, united in a more beautiful manner. She respected in others that thirst after truth which had resulted in such deep persuasions as regarded herself.

I have been particular rather in detailing the mainspring of this young lady's character—this love and reverence for sincerity and truth—that strong sense of vital religion which thence had arisen; for this once well understood, the rest followed of course:—affections calm though strong —earnest persuasions—temperate judgments—de-

votion to right—and a tranquil indifference to the glare and bustle of that life by which she was surrounded.

But the necklace is still in her hand; the door opens, and Mr. Wilmington enters the room.

He is looking younger and handsomer than ever; his tall, slight, elegant figure is set off by dress even more than usually gay; his brown hair is arranged as might become a man of five-and-twenty, and which, but for certain fine lines about the mouth and brow, he really might pass himself off to be. For the rest, he looked much as when we left him last, and that is, anything but an indisputable gentleman: a certain French look—a Count look—a flashy look—they are more unpleasing than ever, now he was in high spirits, and acting the part of young lover and quondam bridegroom. His hands just at present are filled, however, with papers and letters, and he seems very much pressed for time.

"How do, Caroline? Ha! Mrs. Vernon, how do?—Fine morning. Caroline, here are letters

you must write to your brother for me. This cursed business in Wales!—tell him I wish he would arrange all that as fast as he can, and come home. I want him deucedly, tell him—he will understand. Do it by this day's post.—That's my good girl."

"I will write immediately."

"No, not immediately. The phaeton is at the door, and I will drive you to Templeton this fine morning. I want to show Lizzy her new phaeton; I am sure she will like it. Houlditch has surpassed himself; you never saw a turn-out in such capital style in your life. Come, on with your bonnet—we have no time to lose. There, let me put all these things into your desk—I shan't go into the city to-day. Ha! what have we got here?"

"Do you like it?" said Caroline, displaying her necklace.

"Very handsome, upon my honour—Grey's? Excellent taste—what I call really handsome. Emeralds, of course?"

"Yes. I am glad you like it."

"Have you bought it, you extravagant baggage?"

"I thought Miss Emerson would like it."

"Is it for her? Dear Caroline,"—and he stooped and kissed her cheek, and patted it with much kindness;—"Dear, good girl, you could not have given me greater pleasure."

Caroline looked gratified. Mrs. Vernon folded her black mode cloak round her.

"Good bye, Caroline."

"Don't go away so soon, dear aunt; we shall be back again in less than an hour. It is but a step to Templeton. Won't you stay dinner? Do, dear aunt; I have the flower-garden to show you,—the new bed of verbenas. You must have one like it; it is beautiful. Here is the last new novel. Put yourself in the corner of the sofa. Here is your footstool. Do stay."

"Caroline," said Mrs. Vernon, half angrily, "you would persuade one to anything."

But she suffered her niece to take off her bonnet

and cloak, and to ensconce her in her favourite place, where she sat upright—for to lean back was against her principles—and taking her book, she put on her spectacles.

It was truly a splendid afternoon, and as the wind lifted the muslin curtains which hung over the windows, a glorious prospect presented itself. The woody banks and hills of Surrey; the Thames winding silvery through; the shrubberies, temples, fountains, and conservatories of Mr. Wilmington's large gardens; the dashing fall of waters; the singing and lisping of birds; the soft whispering breeze; the sun glittering and glowing upon them all. It was truly charming.

Caroline rang for her bonnet and cloak, whilst Mr. Wilmington employed himself in opening and examining one of those formidable compositions, consisting of a quire almost, of paper, neatly ruled,

and lined, and penned (I wish every one wrote as legibly), with—

"To a Buhl cabinet, richly inlaid with gold, and mother-of-pearl, handles, elegantly chased, antique mountings, &c.;"

"To —— yards rich gold and purple brocatelle damask for curtains, &c.;"

"To making the same;"

"To —— yards rich imperial silk, figured, with embossed heading, &c. &c.;"

Till, turning the pages impatiently over, he came to the final sentence, 5,999*l.* 18*s.* 11½*d.*

"Five thousand pounds!" muttered he; "what an unconscionable rascal!—a deuced heavy bill! Here, Carry," folding it hastily up, and stuffing it into the drawer of her writing-table, "I'll look the items over some other time."

Caroline had not heard the amount of the bill thus easily disposed of. She was attending to Mrs. Vernon.

"I have been thinking," began Mr. Wilmington, after a few moments' reflection, "that, after all,

the back bed-room in Belgrave-square will be the quietest and most convenient for us. But it is too small—as impossible to make oneself comfortable in such a nutshell as it is to endure the noise of the square. A large bow might be thrown out on the side to the leads. I don't wish to go to the expense of carrying it up all the way. I have an idea that it might be supported on pillars."

"That would darken the back dining-room," said Mrs. Vernon, rather gruffly.

"True. I suppose it must be carried up. I wish I had thought of this before we furnished; but it don't very much matter; the back dining-room will be enlarged and improved."

"I should think it was large enough already for any reasonable creature," observed the old lady in the same tone.

"My dear Mrs. Vernon," flying to her, "you cannot possibly judge of the necessities of these things;" with an insinuating smile. "You, dearest madam, endowed with so much philosophic contentment, and who can find nothing to wish in

your delicious retirement, can form no idea, I assure you, of the requirements which weigh upon us poor labourers in the great world. The thousand obligations, the necessities entailed by convention. I declare, I often envy the gardener's boy, with his five shillings a-week, whistling at his work. *He* is rich,—enviable—for he has enough; whilst we, with the innumerable claims upon us—the countless demands of our station and place! The mines of Golconda could scarcely make us feel rich!"

"So it seems," said the unmollified old lady.

"But, my dear madam, you should consider all this in judging of us poor strugglers in the tide of fashion. You cannot, blest as you are in happy immunity from such things—it cannot enter into your head—your imagination——"

"I don't want it to enter either into my head or my imagination—which, I suppose, is much the same thing. I have no taste for these habits of extravagant luxury, and am in no danger of

acquiring them. I wish as much could be said for Caroline."

"For Caroline—ha! ha! what! for my ascetic—my Caroline—my unjewelled Roman virgin? You know she is a reproof to me every day."

"I don't think she has been a reproof to-day—at least, she seems to me quite to have entered into the spirit of the place and company."

"Do you mean about the emerald chain?" said he, with a voice of some emotion. "No, Mrs. Vernon, you do her injustice there—If it be her misfortune to have a father perhaps a little too fond of these things, do not blame my Caroline, that at a moment like this, she studies to gratify *his* taste rather than her own."

"Well, well; I have done," said Mrs. Vernon, settling herself on the sofa, and opening her book.

The phaeton was announced, and the father and daughter descended. It was a most elegant affair, and a pair of beautiful horses in it; two grooms, complete as grooms could be, mounted on horses

a perfect match to those in the carriage, were in attendance.

Mr. Wilmington took the reins; Caroline placed herself by his side. He was no bad whip; and away they drove.

At Templeton lived Miss Emerson, the bride elect—with whom I have already made you in some degree acquainted. She was the daughter of a merchant, who lived in considerable wealth and comfort at this place, but who certainly could not vie in expenditure or display with Mr. Wilmington. She had been educated at the same school with Caroline and Flavia, and was well acquainted with them both. She was esteemed to be a highly accomplished person in the circle in which she moved; and certainly she played as well as a person without the least taste or feeling can play—danced only too well—painted flowers and butterflies—and dressed to perfection. She was in other respects like other empty, ill educated, dressy girls—very good-humoured when she was pleased, very good-natured when it cost

her nothing; neither envious nor jealous when she held the first place; and though she ran long bills, which she knew not how to pay, would not have wronged people in any other way. She was tall, slender, fair, with very handsome features, fine blue eyes, abundance of hair, and, in short, as nearly the double of Mr. Wilmington as well could be.

Mr. Wilmington, in spite of his years, was considered a great catch among the young ladies of her acquaintance, it would seem; and Miss Emerson was extremely well satisfied with her conquest.

The fair lady was at her pianoforte when the phaeton stopped at the door—the clear, brilliant vibrations of which were heard through the open window. She rose from her seat as Mr. Wilmington and his daughter entered the room, and running to her "dear friend—her sweet Caroline," embraced her with all the tenderness which stepmothers elect are wont to show to their future bridegroom's children. Then, recovering herself,

with a sweet bashfulness, she favoured her lover with a half blushing, half tender salutation, and sat down upon the sofa, still holding her dear friend's hand in hers.

"Sweet Caroline!—So good of you to come to see me—and in this scorching sun, too—So sweet and friendly! How did you come?"

"I drove her across in the phaeton which Houlditch has just sent in," said Mr. Wilmington; "I thought you might perhaps like to see it. The colour seems to me a thought too light. Would you indulge me by casting an eye upon it?—Your taste is so just."

"Did you order it to be dark-green?"

"Yes, it is our colour."

"And the arms?—I hate a tawdry mantle like a horse-cloth."

"Then you will be pleased. The coat of arms is very neatly painted on the simple shield."

"Oh, that won't do at all—nothing but the crest. I assure you Lady Maria E—— called in her phaeton yesterday, and there was nothing on

the panel but the crest. I believe it is considered quite vulgar to load a light affair like this with anything more than one's crest."

"Would you like it altered?"

"Oh, by no manner of means, as the thing is done. Pray, don't let me be the occasion of any trouble about it. I merely gave my opinion;—the matter is quite a trifle."

"No trifle, if it is less pleasing to you."

"Oh, thank you; I own I like to have things in good taste—that is as other people of taste have them; and I have a horror of finery (pressing to her lips a French embroidered handkerchief, trimmed with broad Valenciennes, of about 350 francs the yard),—have not you, Caroline?"

"I think carriages always look better plain," said the future daughter-in-law.

"But, Caroline; here is charming intelligence—Flavia comes to town, after all, this year. She is to be with the old Duchess. Now, is not this odd? the Duchess is an old fogie, we all know, and scarcely ever goes out, and she has asked Flavia to come to her.

I don't know what the poor little creature will do in that big house; she will be like a little avodevat in a parrot's cage, quite lost in that vast lumbering place; but I suppose the Duchess may have designs. There is her grandson Lord George;—all his family are in Paris you know, but he is in town—the Guards, you know. Oh! he is a dear wicked creature: he has been, they say (whispering) such a sad rake—spent such loads of money—quite irresistible, everybody says; but such stories of his extravagance! I'll tell you all, some day. However, a match with the Welsh heiress would set all right."

"But I hope dear little Flavia won't marry Lord George, if he is so horrid," said Caroline.

"Oh, quite dreadful!" still in an under-tone; "but so divinely handsome—such a look—that look which I prefer to all others—that of a complete man of the world . . . . . However, Flavia is certainly coming, and I shall be so glad to have her."

"And when she comes," said Mr. Wilmington,

putting on his most insinuating smile, "that will prove, I hope, a favourable circumstance for me. I shall then urge my suit effectually for the fixing of the day that is to make me the happiest of men, I trust. When does she come?"

"The 10th of this month, I believe."

"Then the week after—say the 16th—Tuesday. May I call that the happiest day of my life?"

"Tiresome man! How teasing you horrid creatures are," &c. &c.

Poor Caroline! this courting before her—her father's last sentence! But she had learned, as all who love peace, and are destined to live with those of less delicacy of feeling than themselves, must learn, to take no offence when none was intended, and to harden themselves against random blows in the dark;—so she sat quietly whilst Miss Emerson hesitated and resisted, and Mr. Wilmington urged and flattered. At last, her father rose to depart, having gained his point; and now hurried and anxious, lest the fine house he had taken in Belgrave-square should not be perfectly ready to

receive the superfine young lady who was to be its mistress; and whilst he worried himself to death about it, Caroline leaned back in the carriage, feeling it more difficult to be reasonable, than ever she had done in her life.

CHAPTER II.

Pray only, that thy aching heart,
From visions vain content to part,
Strong for Love's sake, its woe to hide,
May cheerful wait the Cross beside.

KEBLE.

THE house in Belgrave-square—thanks to the exertions of the different artists employed—was ready upon the 16th. Thanks also, it may be said, to the unwearied exertions of Mr. Wilmington. How much the patience of Caroline had been tried by consultations upon the various claims of lavender and crimson—azure blue and pearl, between white and gold—oak and gold—or gold

alone,—size of mirrors and claws of tables, it would try your patience to describe. The wearisome, endless fretting of the flesh that it proved to Mr. Wilmington—the burden all these weighty matters were to his feeble soul, I shall not attempt to say.

"Time and the hour runs through the roughest day," and time and the hour brings us the 15th, and upon the 15th there sat Caroline in the large drawing-room in Belgrave-square, exhausted by wearisome exertions—sick of gilding, satin, and ormolu—refreshing herself by inhaling the fresh air which blew through a large conservatory, just filled with fresh and fragrant flowers.

Caroline had just been inspecting and directing the men who had arranged them, after having inspected and directed a thousand other matters —her dress disordered, her hair deranged from its usual neatness, her hands yet covered with the gloves soiled by her work,—for even the rich and great cannot escape such labour altogether, when things are to be very fine—she looked heated, and

she felt sick at heart, dissatisfied with herself and every one. All this hurry, this pomp, this ostentatious display—it was almost hateful to her.

Thus she sat, her head leaning against the conservatory door, when she was refreshed by the presence of one whom she loved with a tenderness more than common to the tender relationship which united them—her beloved brother Henry entered.

Henry has not improved in appearance since we parted with him. Cares, which do not properly belong to so early an age—an anxious attendance upon business—the life of the counting-house which he, from the highest principles as we know, had long since adopted, had increased the shyness and reserve of his manners, and added to the homeliness of his mien and features; yet such as he was, Caroline loved him almost to adoration.

Some years younger than herself—from a child of a more sensitive and timid nature, we have

seen that something of the tender protection of a mother had been added to a sister's fondness. Every year's experience had added to her high appreciation of his worth, and to her interest in his fate. She had long understood the sacrifice of happiness which had been made, in consequence of the vain and feeble character of the father; and with grief, beheld the ravages made in the gay spirit, which ought to belong to youth, by anxieties which ought never to have clouded them. The carelessness and extravagance of the father had gone on increasing since the death of his wife. He had attempted to assume the character of a young disengaged man of fashion, and spared neither pains or expense in fitting out the outline, as he conceived, of it. Whilst Henry, early conscious that everything depended upon his care, devoted himself to business, and laboured indefatigably, by his care and industry, to avert the consequences of his rashness and imprudence, and manage with prudence and success those innumerable speculations by which his father

proposed to supply his insatiable demands for money.

But the task was as ungrateful and disheartening as it was wearisome; for Mr. Wilmington, though he invariably flew to his son for advice and assistance when any one of his rash speculations failed, and invariably relied upon his spirit and perseverance to disentangle him from its evil consequences, was as invariably deaf to every argument his son could urge at the outset to prevent his engaging in these wild schemes. Nothing could be more disheartening than such a situation. The labour of the Danaides is light to it.

Harry had the virtue to persevere; but his spirits sank under it, though his resolution was unflinching. This his sister saw, and well understood; she adored him with that holy adoration which is to be won, and won alone by moral excellence.

Harry loved Caroline as one of extreme sensibility, with the consciousness of his own worth, and of the slight value attached to it by men in

general, loves one whom he feels understands and estimates him, and whose esteem and affection is the sweet and almost sole earthly recompense of his labours. This affection was still shared, however, by his friend. The mutual affection between him and Selwyn had ripened into a strong and permanent friendship; and, unsuspected by all but Caroline, his long despairing passion still filled in secret his heart.

He came in and sat down by Caroline, and his eyes were clouded by so tender a melancholy, his homely features filled with so gentle an expression, that his sister thought him more than beautiful as she looked at him.

"My dear Harry, how did you find him?"

"Very, very ill, poor fellow! His cough, he tells me, was incessant last night. He looks wretchedly. Madeira has done nothing for him."

"Poor Selwyn! How sad! And how grievous for poor Mr. Craiglethorpe. Has any one written to him?"

"My father wrote when Selwyn returned, to tell him frankly what he thought of him. He sent the letter overland. Mr. Craiglethorpe must have received it by this time; and I doubt not will return if he can. Too late! Selwyn will never live to see him."

"I am very sorry for you all."

"And for yourself, Caroline?"

"I grieve, grieve deeply, that you should lose such a friend, Harry."

"And nothing more?" sitting down by her and taking her hand. "Nothing more?"

"I don't know how it happens, Harry, but I believe I am grown old before my time."

"Well, my dear," with a sigh, "as things turn out, perhaps it is better. I am very absurd to wish; and yet, poor dear fellow, I think he would die happier if he could flatter himself . . . . but it is better as it is."

"Indeed, indeed it is, dear Harry. I own to you,—for, dear brother, you have all my confidence. —I sometimes wish I were less insensible myself;

but I do not know well why all the spring of youth and hope seems withered within me. I appear to go on quietly, and not unhappily; for I do not seem ever to imagine happiness. I do not imagine there is such a thing as great happiness to be found in this world. I am too rational, I sometimes think," and she sighed. "But, Harry," recovering herself, "I hope you will be less rational than I am, that I may doat upon your wife and children."

He started as if something had pricked him sharply. He turned his head away.

"My wife and children! No, no, never, never!" Then, looking at her again with his sweet melancholy eyes, "Dear Carry, we will live for one another."

The entrance of a servant interrupted the conversation. It was, upon his exit, renewed in a somewhat different tone.

"You have completed your preparations, I see."

"Yes, and you see how weary I am; but I

believe everything is right at last. I confess I should be sorry to spend many such days as this day; but I think every order has been given. The breakfast—for my father thinks we must have a previous breakfast here before going to church—has been set out in the dining-room; and Gunter has done it very well." And she sighed again.

Poor Caroline! every sentence this evening ends with a sigh; she felt much depressed.

"A breakfast at the bridegroom's house; that seems contrary to the usual custom, and unnecessary."

"My father likes to have it so. He wishes his friends to assemble here first—I would not contradict him."

A short silence. Then Henry began again.

"These rooms are really splendid," he said, looking round. "I am not very much given to observing these sort of things, but really these pink and crimson curtains, these mirrors, these pictures, altogether it has a magnificent effect:

my father has certainly a great deal of taste in these things—everything so completely and handsomely done."

"It makes our poor dear aunt very angry."

"Perhaps she is scarcely right there. I cannot quite make up my mind upon the subject—it is after all relative—to spend is a sort of duty." He never could bear to hear his father blamed by others.

"I believe she has a notion, that great luxury, however large a man's fortune may be, is in itself rather wrong. She has a vague idea—for you know she is no great analyzer of her ideas—that it has a positively corrupting effect upon the heart. I cannot help thinking myself that there is a foundation of truth in what she says."

"I do not know whether luxury corrupts, but I think it enfeebles; and I feel sure that it embarrasses the mind. I inherit, I suppose, the inclination from my mother, who had such an innate love of simplicity—but luxury is not pleasant to me—it seems so to increase the luggage of

life, as to impede the march. When you and I live together, Caroline, we shall not want all these things, shall we?"

"No."

"We will have almost a cottage, and your books—and a John, and a Mary. But here comes my father."

Enter Mr. Wilmington, looking vexed and hurried, and his fine hair in disorder; his colour heightened, a mixture of embarrassment and anger on his face.

"Henry! Is Henry here? Oh, Henry! upon my soul, the impudence of these fellows! Caroline, did you leave the bill-drawer at Roehampton?"

"Yes; I did not think we would require it till we went back. I can get anything you want to-morrow morning."

"Do go down stairs, there's a good girl. Burton wants to speak to me; see what it's all about.....No use plaguing her about these things," following her, and shutting the door. "You see, Henry, this is really a very disagreeable business.

—Here's Formby asking for his money,—seven thousand pounds, or to that tune,—for furniture sent in this last two years. Now really, I am afraid just at this moment we shan't find that sum to our credit at Kinglake's."

Henry looked surprised.

"I understood you, sir, that all the bills had been paid last Christmas."

"All but a few trifling ones, Hal. When you and I made up our budget for the year, I got together enough to liquidate all, as I thought; but these cursed upholsterers' bills do mount up so confoundedly. Will you, there's a good lad—he must be paid—go down into the City as soon as I am off to-morrow, and sell my fifty T. and T. shares, they will more than do it, at two hundred and twenty—stay, lend me a scrip of paper. Six thousand pounds! Plague on it!—well, take the Grand Junction; take enough, that's all; and just step down and tell the fellow he shall have his money to-morrow, and bid him never expect to do a job in this

house again, as long as he lives—an impudent scoundrel!"

Harry looked grave. Mr. Wilmington whistled, went to the window, and employed himself in arranging the folds of one of his rich silk curtains —then—

"Well—how's poor Selwyn?"

"Worse, sir, I am afraid."

"Poor fellow!—d——d unlucky! Would have been a pretty match for Caroline. Poor old Craigie!—it will go nigh to break his heart!"

Henry was looking over some papers which Mr. Wilmington had thrown upon the table.

"Hamlet's, sir, I see."

"Aye,—aye,—aye," stammering a little: "only a few wedding presents for Lizzy. She's a little too fond, perhaps, of these things. Thel ast time —for once in a way. I shall not think of looking at that account till Christmas two years. These d——d fellows, with their consummate exorbitant charges, may wait two years for their money, in all conscience."

"Anderson, sir."

"What the deuce! are all the fellows bewitched? Hewson put all these into my hands as I came up stairs."

"Five hundred guineas for the bays. Really, my dear father, excuse me, but I do wish I might see a little after your bargains in horse-flesh."

"And why, in the name of goodness?—*you* of all people! I should think I was at least as good a judge of a horse as you, Master Harry. What should you know about it,—with two sober tits, one for yourself and one for your servant, and as ordinary a thing as ever I looked on for your cab. But you lads are so conceited! I assure you the horses are well worth the money."

"Well, sir, but how do you propose to pay all these demands?"

"Propose!—nonsense!—mere trifles to a man of my fortune! I'll tell you what, Harry,—if you don't take care, you will grow monstrously like a curmudgeon. Pay!—pay!—pay! I sup-

pose there's enough, if I chose to fork it out, to pay a hundred such rascally tradesmen."

Harry was again silent. Soon afterwards Caroline reappeared, upon which he folded up the papers quietly, put them into his pocket, and left the room.

Mr. Wilmington remained busied in examining every detail of his fine apartments,—touching chairs, looking at china, and again giving the last finish to the folds of his ample window-curtains; then stepping up to his daughter, with a countenance from which every shade of anxiety had disappeared,—

"Really, Caroline, take it altogether, I think it's the completest thing in London. But now let us sit down and arrange the programme of to-morrow.—Stay, lend me your pencil. *My* friends and *your* friends assemble here, a little before nine o'clock. A standing breakfast is arranged for them in the dining-room; a little gossiping, and all that;—one must stand a little raillery, you know, upon such occasions!" with a smile of

gratified vanity as he glanced at the reflection of his fine person and features in a mirror which hung from ceiling to floor just opposite. "One cannot help it if one does look a little too young!" passing his hand through his fine brown hair, in which not one silver thread was discernible. "I don't know how it is, old Time seems to have forgotten me, egad! But he'll make me pay double scores at one of his *times*, I suppose. Heigho!—Well, as I was saying, then to church. My carriage,—you will go with me in my carriage, dear Caroline,—I know you will!" with a feeling in his tone which he never was known to exhibit except when he addressed his daughter, "you will go in my carriage with me, dear girl, won't you?"

"Indeed I will."

"Thank you. Then comes Jones's carriage. He'll bring Henry, with those two strapping daughters of his,—gladly enough, I'll be bound. Jones, though he makes such a parade of his *substance*,—an ostentatious old prig!—Jones will

be glad enough to take Henry in that substantial brown barouche of his; looking, for all the world, like the coach of a city knight in Whittington's days,—a city knight!—worth a plum—Ha! ha!—a century ago. That pondrous old waggon—all chocolate-colour and gilding. He'll be glad enough to take Harry, I say. Poor Hal! he'll be rather of the substantial himself in a year or two, I fear, and that's a pity. Moreover, I don't think he takes to Miss Eliza Jones.—Heigho! Well, after Jones has lumbered off, comes Estcourt. A very different sort of gentleman:—fine as a fox and sharp as a needle, and close as a miser's strong box. He'll be in his neat chariot;—he likes things neat and plain; detests ostentation,—glancing at me, perhaps. Poor wretch! always hesitating between fear of spending and ambition to spend. Aye, Caroline, is that him?"

"Indeed, sir, you are a little hard upon your old friends."

"Friends!—Hang them! I wonder where they

would be now if I had never been their friend. However, let that pass. Who comes next? Oh! your worthy aunt. Bless my soul! I had nearly forgotten her; we must bring her in before Jones, in her queer old-fashioned tub;—but Jones won't relish that, he likes to take the lead as well as any of us."

"My aunt! I believe, my dear father, she does not mean to be there."

"Nay, nay; she won't refuse me her company to church,—it would be unkind. It would look so unkind,—besides, what would people say? Stse, tse—so late," looking at his watch;—"too late to send and do anything. Why did you not tell me this before? Did she really say she would not come?"

"I was so certain, my dear sir, that she would not yield to any persuasions, that I thought it better to spare you both the mutual pain of using or resisting them."

"She is an obstinate old woman,—so full of

her own by-gone notions; never can yield an iota to the wishes or judgment of anybody. Always was, and always will be the same, to the end of the chapter."

Caroline was silent.

"Why, isn't she? Doesn't she seem to take a pleasure in provoking me? No opinion of my judgment; will not yield in the minutest article to any of us."

"When shall I order coffee to be sent up?"

"When? at three quarters, two minutes, six seconds past eight, precisely.—Not a drop—what o'clock? What can you be thinking of? Order coffee and chocolate to be brought up and handed round as people come in. It is to be a *standing* breakfast,—pray observe, Caroline,—anything else would be grossly improper, under the circumstances:—the breakfast is always given at the bride's father's house. I hope you clearly understand this, Caroline,—and do take care to make my people clearly understand it—a table laid out

with fruits, cold meats, &c., &c.,—what you please, but nothing hot,—I wouldn't, for the world; chocolate, coffee, rolls, and bread and butter, handed round. I thought I had made this clearly understood; but really unless I look to the minutest particulars myself, I can never depend upon things being as they should be. Good heavens! I would not have anything else—anything but a *standing* breakfast—for the world."

"I clearly understood you so, my dear sir; and so did Brandon and Hewson; pray don't make yourself uneasy."

"Not make myself uneasy!"—in a fretful tone —"that's easily said. It would make Job himself uneasy. Something is certain always to go wrong in my house. Would you believe it, we were within an ace of not having the new liveries. What do you say to that? The stupid fellow swears Brandon said for the 17th; Brandon swears, till he is black in the face, he said 16th. If he

had taken the precaution of saying 15th .... In matters of importance always be a day before hand," he added, with grave earnestness; "it is one of the best pieces of advice I, as a parent, can give you."

CHAPTER III.

His friends were invited to come and make merry with him, and this was to be the wedding-feast.—L'Estrange.

Bright shone the sun upon the auspicious morning, glittering upon the array of freestone palaces in Belgrave-square, bathing with his early beams their lofty porticoes and windows wide and high, and their awful entrance-doors. The sound of carriages rattling at an unwonted hour is heard, and the cries of footmen and coachmen, added to the din of the many-headed

multitude, assembled to enjoy the sight of magnificence, filled the air. A sweet summer morning it was; the trees in the centre garden waved green and refreshing to the breeze; the sparrows chirped merrily about; blue was the azure vault above. The eye of heaven looked serenely down upon this little corner of the bustling ant-hill; this gaudy, glittering crowd of tiny atomies, running to and fro in their gilded coaches, —serene, still, sublimely, calmly beautiful: and serene, still, sublimely and calmly beautiful, so, I might say, looked Caroline that morning,—only that I will not dishonour her simplicity by terms that might seem affected or exaggerated. Her looks displayed that sole earthly beauty upon which we may believe the Eye of heaven looks down with complacency,—the beauty radiating from the pure well-ruled spirit within, from a lofty soul, and a true and constant heart.

She looked, however, very pale; and the fine features round which her dark hair was braided, wore an air even more than usually still. Her

eyes, so full of that deep expression which gives evidence both of thought and feeling, seemed now more deeply beautiful than ever, as she moved about among her guests with a tranquil gravity that was almost majestic. Yet Caroline thought nothing of all this; she was perfectly and entirely unaffected. Her demeanour this morning was but the simple effect of what had been going on within for the last few hours,—of the earnest struggles against the pain which no child can help feeling upon such an occasion.

She had been struggling hard with herself to overcome this, and at least to obtain composure. When her father, in conformity with the privileges with which he was invested by the laws of God and man, was about to seek happiness in another choice, Caroline was not one to yield weakly to lamentations over the past, or as weakly and less innocently to bewail, far less blame, the means her father chose to adopt to repair his loss. To feel, is human; candidly to consider, divine. Caroline could not help feeling

many things acutely; but she struggled to be equitable and just.

Harry was already in the dining-room when she came down, where were present assembled Mr. Wilmington and a few gentlemen, all standing. Harry leaned against the back of a chair: he was dressed with much more attention than usual; and this, with a certain shade of sweet and tender melancholy upon his features, rendered his appearance more than commonly interesting—nay, almost elegant. He lifted up his eyes as his sister came in—one glance of sympathy; but they did not exchange a word.

Mr. Wilmington was laughing and chatting gaily: he was dressed in better taste than usual, and looked so young and handsome that he very well became the character in which he stood. His fine brown hair was brushed care*lessly* across his forehead, and care*fully* across the crown of his head. He was full of spirits, complacent and happy to a degree. He came up to his daughter with a gallant and winning smile, and presenting

her to the gentlemen, of whom some were to her strangers, made a few light, and, as he thought, remarkably easy and happy speeches; which she received softly and kindly. She knew they were well meant, at least. Soon the bustle increased, and fresh carriages drove to the door.

And first in walked Mr. Jones, with his round, red, handsome face—his very substantial figure—his air of a very considerable man, in his very most courteous humour. He shakes Wilmington heartily by the hand; he has a jest—such as it is—and a kind patronizing speech for everybody—even for Mr. Wilmington himself; for is he not a man of twice his wealth and weight in the City?

His daughter, Miss Jones, is upon his arm, most elaborately dressed; but she is plain, and—to tell the truth—very cross-looking. For, alas! poor Miss Jones had found that even her large portion had failed as yet to obtain her such a settlement as she liked in the world. Miss Lavinia followed, leaning upon the arm of a tall whiskered youth, dressed in the very extreme of the mode, and be-

longing to some crack regiment or other. His coat was of the first cut, his figure slender as a wasp, and his face vacant; for a sort of heedless, lively, good-natured impertinence natural to him had been effectively subdued into vacuity by military hauteur, and the cold reserve which he thought became his social position in a party such as this. He was, however, the pride and glory of his father, who called him "that graceless puppy," and indulged him in every way; and whom he, in return, called "governor," and slighted and looked down upon.

On this fine young gentleman's arm, as I said, hung his youngest sister, Miss Lavinia, who bent and swayed about like a willow wand, with her delicate veil and laces and feathers, and her profuse curls of fair hair hanging about her pretty blue eyes; and she minced, and laughed, and smiled, and chatted, and called the men, "Oh, you wild creature!" and said, "For shame!" and hid her face, but not her smiles; lest she should be called methodistical, which she hated.

And now, my dear reader, you have a slight sketch of what constitutes, in my opinion, the Branghtons of our day.

More carriages; and then Mr. Estcourt's plain, bachelor's carriage,—his servants in plain liveries, — his particularly plain set out, appeared.

Now, Mr. Estcourt was the man of all his acquaintance, of whom Mr. Wilmington stood the most in awe. They had been intimate from their youth upwards—from almost boys; and had succeeded their fathers as partners in the same house. But Mr. Estcourt held himself above Mr. Wilmington, though his inferior in fortune and in the place he occupied in the firm—for he was a scion of a rather good family, and he piqued himself much thereon.

He condescended, it is true, to get money;—and he was one of the hardest and most impassible of men in all transactions of business, that ever closed his hand against the prayers of a sinking or struggling friend: he, however, despised

the ostentation of that wealth which he so insatiably endeavoured to acquire. He had some natural good taste, and the bitterest, most inflexible pride I ever met with in man;—therefore, he detested the vulgar display of his two partners, and chose to spend his money so as rather to evince the elegance of his taste, than the extent of his riches.

A small house, simply, but expensively fitted up;—a few choice pictures, a library,—every volume in which was a rarity; a small but beautifully-appointed table—I should be ashamed to tell you what he gave his cook—such was his style of living.

All well enough, if this more refined taste had not served as a nourishment to his heartless, exclusive pride and self-esteem; and to the contemptuous disdain with which he looked down upon others.

However, to proceed; there all the people stood, and chattered, and tossed off chocolate together, and got into their carriages again. Mr. Wilming-

ton, restless and disconcerted, having unluckily overheard an ironical commendation from Mr. Estcourt upon the unexpected hospitality of the day.

And now we are all standing in the chancel of St. George's, Hanover-square;—are assembled once more in this our fifty-ninth century, to celebrate that primeval institution of the Creator, which, by the simple obligation it exacts, spiritualizes and elevates the relation, or should do; for I am compelled to acknowledge, that in the instance before us—as alas! in so many others—nothing could be less apparent than the spiritual and the divine:—never was holiness, religion, and a pious sense of mutual and sacred obligations more completely out of the question than upon the occasion of the marriage before us, particularly as far as regarded the principals.

Miss Emerson, in a white satin dress, covered with Brussels' lace, displaying to perfection the beauty of her tall and slender figure; her long, fair hair disposed in the most becoming manner—

with a veil, and the indispensable orange and myrtle flowers; her long, swan-like neck modestly drooping; her embroidered handkerchief looking, as somebody says, like a tissue of woven air, in her hand—was, in spite of a few natural feelings that would intrude, chiefly intent upon going through the ceremony in the most agitated and interesting manner that could become a delicate female. Mr. Wilmington was still haunted by that sneering speech of Mr. Estcourt's—it rang in his ears in the most tormenting manner. Old Jones looked stupid, and Miss Jones cross; Miss Lavinia languishing; the Captain fine; and Mr. Estcourt supercilious. Foolish admiration, or foolish fun, was in the faces of most part of the rest.

Of course I except Caroline and Harry, whom you know and feel for already; and two more, for behind Miss Emerson stood the old, kind Duchess, who, as a distant connection, had been invited, and had very kindly attended. She is looking on, her venerable countenance filled with benig-

nity; and she leans with one hand upon an ivory-headed staff, and the other rests upon the arm of Flavia.

Flavia has, since we last saw her, improved extremely in her appearance; pretty and sweet she ever was, but now she is lovely beyond expression. Her countenance is so varying and so animated—when grave, so gentle and soft—when gay, so playful and bewitching; and there is still a peculiar simplicity and originality of manner—in every way all that is most charming. Her features and figure I have already described, and that soft abundance of streaming hair; as for her eyes, I once heard it asked what was their colour—the colour of sunshine, was the reply.

She looks grave now, and watches Lizzy with a serious look of interest; and the tears just moisten her sweet eyes. In her artless goodness of heart, she is thinking of the solemnity of the day:—how awful, how imposing—the mutual pledge—the irrevocable vow; in this case especially, another's children concerned—what a responsibility!

Then her eyes wander towards Caroline; and she thinks of the mother that is gone, and she feels how at this moment to Caroline she must be sadly present. She fancies her pale ghost, in the vestments of the grave, gliding silently through the gaudy circle—and she starts, and looks round for Harry.

He is there, leaning against a pillar, his eyes bent to the ground, most mournful; but they are often mournful. Flavia's eyes rest here.

On a sudden, like the change of a scene in a theatre, it is over, and the company are crowding about the bride. They are going to the vestry, and then to the splendid breakfast which awaits them at the bride's father's house; and Caroline feels a little creature pressing against her, and the softest of hands is thrust into her own. She looks down, and two glistening sweet eyes meet hers, telling a tale of honest affection, tender sympathy, and fervent admiration.

Caroline felt as if balm were spread over her wounded heart. She pressed Flavia's hand tenderly.

They were standing thus together when Harry entered the vestry. A look, a dazzling before the eyes, the deadly paleness for an instant,—but no one observed it,—and Harry recovered himself, so as to come forward and speak as usual.

And now Lord George, who had been present also, came forward to tell Flavia that he thought the Duchess seemed a good deal tired. Lord George is as handsome as ever, and looks the complete man of fashion and of the world: his manners are agreeable, his smile insinuating, and his eyes, when they look upon Flavia, seem to beam with love and fondness. Harry's countenance again underwent rapid changes as he approached;—he felt sick, and retreated behind the crowd.

Flavia looked wistfully at Caroline.

"Caroline, I don't know, but promise me, if I ask a favour, you will refuse me if you do not quite like to grant it. I never know how people may feel at such times. I may perhaps be only a

bother, and in your way; but I should so like to spend this day with you."

Lord George looked very black.

"Have you forgotten the dinner at Richmond?"

"Oh, dear, no; but I don't want to go there at all; that is, if Caroline—if Miss Wilmington—will have me."

"My sweetest Flavia," said Caroline, looking down upon her with a fond, gratified smile; "my sweetest girl, what you ask is so kind in you, and will be so infinitely pleasant to me, that, as I suppose, you have hundreds of dinners of that kind, if you will promise not to repent, I will accept gladly."

"Then I will run to the Duchess, and settle it with her, and be back with you in a moment."

"Yes, my dear; I have one of my father's carriages at my disposal."

She hastened away, Lord George following, without uttering another word, looking, as people say, like a thunder cloud.

"My dear madam—my dear grandmamma—I have a prodigious favour to ask of you."

"Which I hope 'my dear grandmamma' will refuse," said Lord George.

"Well, my dear, what is it?—you seem in a vast hurry."

"Can you spare me to spend the day with Caroline Wilmington, dear grandmamma? You guess why? I need not tell you why I particularly wish to spend *this* day with her."

"I at least can guess why," said Lord George, gloomily.

"I need not say more. You always understand me at a word, dearest madam."

"I think I do in this case, at least, my love; and if Miss Wilmington be of my taste, your company will be particularly acceptable. Go, by all means; but have you not forgotten Richmond?"

"Oh, no."

"I thought as much. Well, I must send your excuses by Lord George then."

"If you please, ma'am. Oh, how good you are! Shall I stay with you till your carriage draws up?"

"No, my love, return to your friend. I shall do perfectly well with this very sweet-tempered looking cousin of yours," nodding to Lord George, "if he will place you under Miss Wilmington's wing, and then come back for me."

Lord George, preserving the most ungracious silence, conducted Flavia to her friend, and, having left her in what he styled delectable company, returned to the good Duchess, put her into her carriage, and jumping in after her himself, humming an air between his teeth or biting his lips, in silent ill-humour, left the good grandmother to her own reflections during the way home.

I need say nothing of the breakfast. It was just like every other elaborate wedding-breakfast,

which, when weddings are cordial, joyous things, produce a very agreeable little fuss and hurry before the last leave-taking comes off; but in this case, what with pompous ostentation upon one side, susceptible vanity upon others, and self-seeking upon all,—it was as cold and uninteresting an affair as I ever found myself present at.

The bride and bridegroom,—she, still preserving her languishing air of bridal sensibility, he, when he was not thinking of himself, only thinking of her with reference to himself, and how this youth, beauty, and grace in his young wife ministered to his vanity,—were supported on each side by the bride's father and her two brothers,—all three fussy, affected, finely-dressed, vulgar men, in their several ways.

Toasts, however, were drank, and speeches were made, and people began to expand in spirits a little under the influence of the good things; and talking and laughing, and eating and flirting,

began on both sides of the table, as they ought to do.

Caroline, Harry, and Flavia sat together at the lower end. Flavia in gay spirits, showering, as I might almost say, her sunny heart-winning smiles upon Harry, who, filled with his own desponding thoughts, turned away, almost unable to bear the feelings this sweet cordiality awakened. And when he did, she would turn and address herself to Caroline, and prattle away, her voice filled with affectionate kindness.

"Then after this grand breakfast is over we are to go out together to Roehampton?"

"If you have no objection, my love."

"I shall so enjoy it; sitting upon the soft green grass, under those delightful trees, chatting and laughing as we used to do."

"And Harry," said Caroline to him, "I hope you are coming out too. I hope this day, at least, you will make a holiday, Harry."

"I must go into the City, and I must visit

Selwyn; and then I will follow you as soon as possible."

"Madness!" said he to himself in the agony of his feelings. "Yet why not? What matters it?" as with a sort of desperate defiance of suffering, which overcame every consideration of prudence, he resolved to snatch at the dangerous delight of her society, whatever the after cost. The daily unhappiness of his life had produced in this naturally temperate nature a sort of restless indifference as to a future, which he felt, but with too much certainty, held out no promise of bliss for him.

But little did his countenance express these feelings: there was nothing observable but a nervous, anxious hurry, as he calculated the time it would take to hasten to the City, glance in at Selwyn, and fly to Roehampton, so as not to lose one moment of this but too delightful day.

He thought the breakfast would never come to an end; for sweet as was her presence there, what was that to the bliss of being alone with her and

Caroline, on such a day, and amid the shades of the shrubberies at Roehampton.

At last the company rose from table, and Lizzy went to change her dress, and to return, and with tears just trembling in her beautiful eyes, to cast herself into her father's and mother's arms, and to be torn away and hurried by her tender bridegroom to her carriage.

And so farewell, and *bon voyage*.

Then the company dispersed; and Caroline and Flavia entered Mr. Wilmington's britschka, and were soon whirled away to Roehampton; and Harry opened the door of Selwyn's room.—A short, sharp, hard cough was heard.

Selwyn was sitting upon a sofa, with a table covered with books before him,—books being tossed upon the sofa and floor around. A waiter stood upon the table, with a small basin of half-

consumed broth, and the untasted parallelograms of dry toast tossed here and there. Upon the other side of the table was another waiter, with a phial of physic, a teaspoon, and a teacup. The room was airy and handsomely furnished, but littered from one end to the other,—boots, slippers, hats, canes, newspapers, caricatures, letters, all in most admired, or rather most sad confusion. There was no female hand,—no mother, sister, wife,—to dispute order and comfort in his sick room. Sick at heart and weary of spirit, the master, with languid hand, it was plain, flung everything away from him as he had done with it, and he had not energy enough left to arrange, or even to order others to arrange the melancholy confusion. Mr. Selwyn possessed a large fortune, —what was that here?—but he had not a female relation in the world. Sickness is a great leveller; in one respect, this rich man's case was one of miserable destitution.

He was lying in his dressing-gown, his coat hanging near him upon a chair, as if his servant

had brought it in, and he had felt too languid to encumber himself with it. Classical books, and books of German and English philosophy, were lying around him, but his finger was on the pages of a trashy novel. He threw it aside with a look of weariness and disgust, and a bright crimson flashed to his cheek as his friend entered.

"Oh! there you are, Harry—I am right glad to see you at last.—Well, it's all over, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes;" and throwing himself into a chair, crossing his arms upon the table, buried his face upon them. Selwyn respected a first moment of emotion; but as the chest of his friend began to heave with unwonted passion, and as tears were evidently running from his eyes, whilst he almost groaned aloud,—surprise succeeded to sympathy, and Selwyn expostulated.

"But, my dear Harry! this is really a weakness, —an unpleasant day, certainly,—but really,——"

"Fool and madman!" cried Henry, rising impatiently and dashing the tears from his eyes.

"My dear Selwyn, forgive me; I was quite overcome,—but it is over now. How are you?"

"Nay; how are *you*, Henry?"

"Oh, don't think of me, my dear fellow. Will you come out to Roehampton to-day? The air would do you good. My sister is there and her friend Miss L——. It is a delicious day; do come; let us be happy, Albert, *once* in this world —let us heap upon one day a pressure of happiness such as this world rarely offers. Alas! that it must be delusive as it is sweet! . . . . And then . . . . ."

"Yes; and then let me pursue the dark dreary road that is leading me downwards to the grave. You are right, Henry. Yes, I will come. Order my carriage, will you? I am past cabs. This delightful day will put life into me."

The ancients mingled the image of death with the roses of their festivals. They seemed to take a voluptuous pleasure in associating the melancholy remembrance of the grave with all that was rich and rapturous, in their bright sense of existence. The dark grave is ever before them—the

cold shadow passes over their jewelled cups, and breathes upon their flowery wreathes—it mingles with their gayest carouses, and rests upon their beds of purple and gold.

So it seemed to be with these two young men: both struck to the heart—one in the spring of hope, the other of life,—one feeling that existence lay like a desert before him, the other, that he soon must die—to seize upon the cup of joy that momentarily presented—crown it—and drain it in one rich draught, and then . . . . . such was the feeling of both.

"Yes, I will spend one last summer day with Caroline," thought Albert.

"Yes, I will yield myself to the dangerous enjoyment of her smiles," muttered Henry.

"What's that, Henry?"

"Oh! Albert, ask me nothing. I love her—I adore her—and for ever in vain."

"Poor fellow!"

A pause. Henry was the first to break it.

"I had forgotten," said he, hastily. "I have

business for my father; I must go into the City. Will you wait for me?"

Alas! poor Henry! Even in this state of excited feeling, he had to plunge into all the worry of business—to thread the dark streets which lead to the temple of mammon—to drive smiles, and roses, and love, and sun-beams out of his head—and to talk with busy clerks in close, dingy rooms filled with desks, and, more dingy still, papers covered with the long array of figures and invoices; he must discard all the sweet dreams of fancy, and think only of realities—stunning, perplexing realities; for, in spite of his father's great wealth, the immediate necessity for paying those bills was truly embarrassing.

No sooner was he seated, pen in hand, to calculate the value of shares and stocks, than he found the provision for the needful fall far short of the demands. These he found pouring in on all sides, and far exceeding what his careless and improvident father had prepared him to expect. To satisfy these numerous claimants, he felt

would be extremely difficult without submitting to very great sacrifices; and already he began to sicken at the thought of the vast waste of property occasioned by this senseless profusion.

Harassed, vexed, disappointed, wearied in spirit, and depressed by that painful sense of pecuniary difficulty, which for the first time came over him, he mounted his horse—all the wild enthusiasm of the morning sobered down to the serious anxieties of the hour. But it was this, in truth, which gave their depth and force to Henry's feelings. It was that they arose, not from the mere effervescence of an idle fancy, which had nothing to do with life but to dally with it and to play with it, and to deck it and cover its hollowness with roses, and silks, and gildings. Steep a man in cold, bitter realities, harden him by contact with the labouring, striving, calculating world of monied business; chasten him by crushing his most delicate tastes, by disgusting his most tender fancies; force him into the struggle with grasping, vulgar human life; and then

change the scene, and lead him to the bowers of sweetness, grace, and tenderness, and let what is to him as an angel's presence gild the enchanting picture; and then tell me whether that man will not feel it.

But there is something even more than this. Love is a passion, which, to be deep and lasting, requires a certain *substantiality*, if I may say so, a seriousness in it. Few men not engaged in the current pursuit of important objects, acquire that depth and firmness of character which is necessary to the existence of a strong enduring passion. I have my doubts whether the pretty fellows who have nothing better to do than to make love, can form any idea of what the genuine sentiment is.

Harry, calmed and sobered, arrived at his friend's door; the excitement of the morning subdued, and all its bright visions tempered down; but was the image which was peace, and love, and joy to him less vivid, or less dearly cherished in his heart of hearts? ah! no.

Albert, faint and sick,—for the warmth of the sun which diffused cheerfulness upon all around, seemed only to excite a sort of feverish, irritating, sense of heat in him,—leaned languidly against the cushions of his britschka. Henry sat opposite, and marked with sorrow the sharpening features,—the evening brightness of the eye,—the flickering hectic colour on his cheek. The spirits of the sick man had already fallen, and the picture of delight had faded away. A load pressed upon his bosom; iron fetters hampered, as it were, his limbs—the very light became painful, nay, loathsome to his eyes. By the time he reached Roehampton, to lie down upon a sofa, to close his eyelids, to sink into the melancholy solitude of extreme sickness, solitude even in the very midst of those we love best, "free among the dead, like unto them which go down unto the grave," was all that poor Selwyn could do.

Harry, perceiving how faint he was, and already repenting that he had persuaded him to come out,

laid him upon the sofa. Caroline spread the cushions for him, and spoke to him with a tenderness and kindness that soothed even the bitterness of that bitter hour, whilst Flavia stood by watching them in silence; her eyes swimming with tender pity, and her looks, as Henry turned towards her, filled with compassion and goodness.

And yet it was, after all, a sweet day. Not enrapturing and intoxicating as the two friends had imagined to themselves,—but tender, holy, and still. Albert dosed upon the sofa in that beautiful drawing-room—Caroline sat by him with her work in her hand,—Flavia by her side, pretending too to work,—Henry leaning over the back of the sofa looking at them, a few words dropping from time to time in that low voice which seems to give an air of peculiar intimacy and confidence to the conversation. There was happiness in the mere feeling of being all together. Flavia very often addressed Henry, and looked at him with something of the same sort of interest as

that with which Caroline regarded the sufferer upon the sofa.

"I am sure," said she, "that you have been jading yourself in that tiresome City again, Henry; just as you used to do last year, when you would come home so hot and good for nothing." And then she thought,—as she had often done before, with mingled pity and indignation,—upon the father's thoughtless levity, which allowed the son in the flower of his youth to be buried in these wearisome cares and occupations.

And as thus she thought, her countenance, true to that good and sensible heart, beamed upon him with more than usual sweetness, and her voice was modulated to a harmony softer than ever, when she addressed him—and she very often did address him, for she was accustomed to treat him with a sort of playful, sisterly familiarity.

And thus this charming summer afternoon was idled away. Albert could not go down to dinner, so they agreed not to leave him, but to go by turns; and Henry and Flavia went down first, for

Albert had whispered, "Caroline, stay with me." He coughed that sharp short cough which went to her heart.

"Are they gone? . . . . Caroline, you do not—you cannot love me; yet give me your hand."

She gave it him.

"I am glad I must die, Caroline, since so it is; for as one loves a dying man, you can and you do love me, now."

"Indeed, Albert, I have the most sincere and perfect friendship and affection for you. Do not let us talk of either mournful or foolish things."

"If you had been my wife, Caroline, I might have died holding your hand as I do now; but things go hard with me—health—youth—love—the common universal blessings—all denied," said he, with a shade of bitterness; "and yet, strange mystery of sickness—to lay my hand upon this pillow, and be quiet, is almost all I desire—*rest*—might this hand have only been mine!"

And he pressed it, then closed his eyes, and lay holding it;—he would willingly so have departed.

Henry and Flavia sat down to dinner. She, relieved from the actual presence of poor Albert and his sufferings, chatted cheerfully away. He spoke little and eat nothing. Presently she ran away to exchange with Caroline.

"He is asleep," whispered Caroline, pointing to her imprisoned hand.

"I will not leave him. Go down again; I will stay here."

"No!" said he, releasing her hand, "I am not asleep. Go, Caroline, and you, too, pretty Flavia,—leave me here. I shall be quiet, and then I shall feel better."

They went down, and there he lay.

The light curtains rising and falling to the wind displayed the lovely landscape beyond;—that beautiful world of which he was soon to take leave. The cheerful insects buzzed among the flowers; the wind murmured and whispered amid the trees, and the sounds of active life were heard in the distant fields and lanes. By-and-by the bell of a neighbouring church began to toll.

He listened;—it was the passing bell. Slow and solemn, and mournful, it fell upon his ear, calling him from this warm, sunny, world of life, to his cold, damp, solitary grave.

It was too much. He rose hastily, and followed the rest to the dining-room, called for food and for wine; and, as the momentary excitement poured the stream of life more fervently through his veins, he talked and smiled; and then they walked out, and enjoyed that beautiful evening, in those beautiful grounds; and his friends began to rejoice in his strength, and attribute the languor of the morning to the accidental fatigue.

It was a happy—happy evening.

CHAPTER IV.

My Lord advances with majestic mien,
Smit with the mighty pleasure, to be seen.

POPE.

HENRY spent a most painful month, during his father's absence; his anxiety and embarrassment increasing daily, as fresh and fresh accounts poured in, and every morning produced some new proof of Mr. Wilmington's unbounded extravagance. The partners began to look unpleasantly. Jones growled, and Estcourt sneered; and Henry counted with a sort of angry impatience the

days that were to elapse before his father's return.

In the meantime, Mr. Wilmington and his Lizzy pursued their delightful tour. Their pleasure consisted principally in driving, with all the *éclat* and hurry of foreign posting to the principal inn of every place they visited, examining the *carte* and the appointments, and astonishing the delighted landlord by the magnificence of their orders,—their apartments, entrées, and wines, being of course the most expensive that were to be had. If the day was very fine, and they not particularly idle, they would perhaps lounge out before dinner to visit one or two of the principal lions of the place; and Lizzy would take out her splendidly bound sketch-book, and in a soft, indifferent kind of manner, make a few indistinct marks, which she fancied was making sketches;—which sketches she would coquette about, and affect to hide from the enamoured husband; who, fortunately for her, was no judge of drawing. This, with being tired, interesting head-aches, and

a little gossipping with her maid,—assisted by the never-to-be-exhausted pleasure of buying lace, trinkets, and finery, at the various places she visited,—whiled away the time pretty well. Then she would walk through the picture galleries, and mark the principal pictures in her catalogue. But she scarcely gave herself time to look at them, and would have had not the slightest conception of their merit, if she had. Moreover, she would write a few lines in her journal;—and so—with sleeping a good deal, and eating not a little, she got along.

Mr. Wilmington was too proud of displaying the young and beautiful creature he had married, and too busy taking care of or adorning himself, to feel the time hang heavy upon his hands. The toilette, the table, and more especially the seeking out and purchasing articles of vertu, which he thought would demonstrate even to Estcourt the delicacy of his taste;—learning all the names, qualities, and distinctions of the Rhine wines, and purchasing largely for his cellar, amused him very

well. For the rest, he lay back dozing in his carriage, as they swept rapidly through the magnificent scenery of South Germany; though he had been awake enough, when they spent a few days as they usually did at the different Brunnens; there, he displayed—much to his satisfaction, his own tall, slender figure, and the elegant figure of his beautiful wife,—his equipages, dress, and expensive manner of living,—before all the Counts, Barons, Dukes, and Princes—Russian, Hungarian, Austrian, Prussian, and Pole—which there abounded; eyeing at the same time the orders which adorned their button-holes with mingled envy and veneration.

Moreover, at these Brunnens, he was enabled to make a sort of acquaintance with many of these magnates. He had spoken to Prince this, and ridden with Count that, and lost his money to Baron so and so; he had heard himself called the rich and handsome Englishman. Lizzy had become known, on her side, to Princesses and Landgravines; she had talked with Ambassadresses and smiled upon Prince Royals.

In short, Mr. Wilmington, as he retraced his steps, felt excessively gratified and elevated in his own opinion, by the results of this expensive journey. And certainly, if, as some one has said, self-conceit be one of the first blessings from heaven, it cannot be denied that he had very considerably increased his possessions in that respect; while Lizzy,—who only wanted the gloss of foreign travel to finish the very complete education she had received at Mrs. Steelcollar's seminary,—returned with the conviction that she was now the very model of what an elegant female, gifted with superior advantages, both from art and nature, ought to be.

When they arrived in Belgrave-square, where Mr. Wilmington, with his newly-acquired style of manners, entered his drawing-room in all the dignity of self-possession, his elegantly-dressed foreign looking wife hanging upon his arm, and while extending one hand to his daughter, nodded to his son,—while Lizzy smiled and lisped out her tender expressions of pleasure at seeing her dear Caroline

and Henry again,—Flavia stood apart—for she happened to be there—measuring them with her eye, and drinking in the whole meaning of the scene with mingled amusement and contempt.

"And Flavia, too,—sweet Flavia," lisped Mrs. Wilmington.

"Yes, Lizzy, here I am. How do you do?"

She did not know what to say.

"Miss L—— I am enchanted to find you here, honouring my daughter with your company," was Mr. Wilmington's address.

"Oh, sir, we have been a great deal together whilst you have been away; have not we, Caroline?"

They were still standing; like bad actors in a bad play, the characters could neither get on nor off. How could the piece advance when those who were to play the principal parts did not know what they would be at; and where the subordinate characters had too much taste and delicacy to take the lead? At last, however, they all reached their chairs, and Mr. and Mrs. Wilmington began to play grand company, as

the children say, before their own son and daughter.

Harry was sitting rather apart, by one of the windows, looking harassed and uneasy. Caroline began to talk to Lizzy about her tour. Flavia sat down behind her, smiling to herself at the absurd figure they all made, in this affectionate family party, and wishing herself a thousand miles off—that is to say, in Berkeley-square, with her good, well-bred, simple grandmamma, even though Lord George should be there,—rather than with those superfine people, who were too genteel to show a spark of natural affection; and, therefore, she, with whom to think was to act—and to wish, to do—said,

"Henry, my footman is, I believe, in the hall, and I am going to walk home."

"I thought you would stay dinner, to-day," said Caroline. "Mrs. Wilmington would be very happy, I am sure,"—recollecting herself, and appealing to Lizzy, who already began to look rather offended and uneasy at the daughter taking the

liberty to make this invitation to her father's house.

"Indeed, dearest Flavia, it would make Mr. Wilmington and myself but too happy," she said, however.

"No, thank you all. I must go home to-day; I shall be expected."

Henry took his hat, as she left the room, and followed her down stairs.

"You will let me go with you, Flavia; I do not like that you should, at this time of day too, walk up Grosvenor-place by yourself."

"Oh, thank you, I shall be delighted with your escort."

They left the house together, he walking by her side; but he did not offer his arm. He was silent and absorbed.

"What is the matter, Harry?" at last she said, in her sweetest tone. "Why do you look so unhappy? But I beg your pardon, I have no right to ask; family matters, I know they are;—only tell me this, is there any reason why you should look so *very* unhappy?"

He sighed, but made no answer, and they proceeded. Presently a group of young men, on horseback, followed by their grooms, come up Grosvenor-place.

"What a sweet little figure!" cries one.

"What a gay Lothario by her side!" laughed another.

"Where are *you* off, George?" exclaimed a third, as Lord George hastily dismounted, threw his bridle to his groom, and joined the walkers.

"What, in the name of all that's good, Flavia, can you be doing here at this time of day?"

"I am walking home."

"Walking home! Where is my grandmother's carriage? Where can you have been?"

"Oh, I have been at Mr. Wilmington's; and Mr. Henry Wilmington is so good as to escort me home."

"I will spare Mr. Henry Wilmington any farther trouble," said Lord George, ceremoniously and haughtily,—"take my arm, Flavia."

"Miss L—— condescended to accept of my services," said Henry; "and I hope not to be dismissed before we reach her door."

"Thank you," said Flavia, looking a little embarrassed; "but I need give you no further trouble now. Good day, Mr. Wilmington;" and with a slight curtsey she walked away with Lord George.

It might have been observed that she called him Harry when alone with him, and Mr. Wilmington when in presence of Lord George. But poor Harry was consoled with no such reflection; he saw only the distinguished figure of this high-bred young man, and mentally contrasted it with his own homely appearance, as he, too, had walked up Grosvenor-place, the light figure of the lovely Flavia beside him.

He understood himself to be dismissed, as a matter of course, to make way for Lord George.

He sighed as one accustomed to disappointment sighs, and turned slowly homewards.

Lord George walked on, erect and triumphant, by the side of his young companion.

"Upon my soul, Flavia," said he, "you do show a most delectable taste in the selection of those you distinguish with your favour. I suppose the next thing we shall hear is, that you have eloped with that very choice specimen of a city merchant's son and heir; and we shall have you falling down at grandmamma's feet and asking her blessing upon so rational a choice."

"What nonsense you talk, Lord George," she answered rather pettishly. "What vulgar nonsense! about city merchants, and run-away matches. Really, you would disgrace a French dancing-master at a second-rate boarding-school, with these supremely fine airs."

"So, so; we are in a huff. I beg ten thousand pardons. No idea things had gone so far, upon my honour."

"No, I am not in a huff; and you have no right to accuse me of being in a huff, which you

invariably do when I think you vulgar or impertinent."

"Vulgar I may be," said he, with a self-satisfied smile and drawing himself up; "but impertinent," stooping down to her with much tenderness in his air, "I can scarcely conceive that I can be, in anything which concerns you, Flavia."

"And why not, I beg?"

"Why not? What a question! Is not everything you do, think, or say, of a million times more consequence to me than to any other creature breathing? Flavia, you know it; and why, in the name of mischief, you choose to amuse yourself and torment me, by coquetting with a Russia merchant's clerk, I confess, passes my conception. I own, if your choice were a little more elevated, there might be some excuse. A man does not feel so excessively mortified when he sees the woman he adores, adored and a little flattered by the adoration, of men his equals, and perhaps his superiors. One may bear that; but such a dangler as this! Upon my life! I could

scarcely help laughing, mad as I was, as I saw that pretty bonnet—that sweet little mantilla—and a figure, which might have belonged to the youngest of the Graces herself, by the side of honest, substantial, cent per cent."

Flavia turned away her head without making any reply, but she drew away her hand from Lord George's arm.

"Nay," said he, looking under her bonnet; "is it so *very* serious an affair? Nay, Flavia; if you are offended, and that little scolding tongue of yours is silent, I shall begin to think it more than a laughing matter—upon my word, I shall."

"I wish you wouldn't plague me so," impatiently shrugging her shoulder at him.

He laughed at the pretty pouter.

"You little love!—you darling!—you dear, dear, little Flavia! how can you be so cross?"

"Why do you speak to me in that manner, Lord George?" suddenly turning round and looking him full in the face. "I am sure I don't

know what right you have to speak in that way; and I don't like it."

"In what way? Nay, you shall tell me in what way—what way do you mean? Tell me over again—what did I say in *that* way? Come, repeat it."

"You are excessively disagreeable," said she, hardly able to help crying between vexation, embarrassment, and anger.

But he continued to torment her. He had contrived to maintain the easy familiarity of childhood between them, and he was not disposed to forego the advantage.

"You know your power over me, you dear thing, you—you know you have tormented me ever since you came home for the holidays from Mrs. Steelcollar's, in your dear little prudish white frock, and those bunches of pink ribbons that tied up your adorable little sleeves. You did not understand then—how should you?—what mischief you were doing with me; but you do know—or, at least,

you ought to know—now," he added, more seriously.

And he tried to replace her arm in his again; but she shook him off and walked on.

"I only know that you talk in a way I don't like at all."

"Pooh—pooh! You know you do like it of all things. Every woman likes—must like—it is her very nature—to be worshipped and idolized, as I worship and idolize you. But here we are, at last. Now, don't go to my grandmother with that heated face. She dotes on you so, that, fond as she is of me, I lay myself under her highest displeasure, if I presume to vex you ever so little. Come, come, Flavia, don't be so cross and unaccountable—don't go away without one friendly word," as she was crossing the hall without looking at him.

She now stopped and said,—

"I don't know what words you want me to say, Lord George. If I were to speak out what I now think, I am sure it would not please you."

"No, I'll be bound it would not; nothing ever does, when you take that grave governess tone. So, thank you, I'll do without it. *Au revoir*, sweetest creature upon the face of the earth!"

And kissing his hand in a half-tender, half-joking manner, he walked away.

That day the Duchess dined alone with her two grandchildren. The good Duchess, who lamented —as a sensible, pious friend must do—the idle, thoughtless manner in which Lord George passed his time, and who saw little hope of any call to the public service—for him the best, nay, only chance of awakening the dormant good in his character—looked fondly to the hope that his passion for Flavia might exercise that beneficial influence over his mind which she so desired to see.

Few people, perhaps, would have looked for any very important influences from a gay, fluttering creature like this young girl; but the Duchess understood her well, and discerned the steady good sense and intellectual vigour which that pretty smiling exterior concealed; and she desired no better chance for Lord George than to live under the influence of such a being.

The very large fortune, too, to which Flavia was heiress had some effect upon her wishes; though, to do her justice, slight in comparison to the other. However, that for all these reasons she did wish most ardently to see Lord George and Flavia united, is most certain; and, in consequence, she did everything in her power to promote their being together. Flavia at eighteen was thus exposed to all the fascinations of a very handsome and really charming young man of fashion; but eighteen—heedless, shortsighted, vain and giddy as it is mostly considered to be—possesses in many lovely instances, an innocent, disinterested, unsophisticated wisdom, which resembles that of the

guileless child, wise in virtuous instincts, in a strong uncompromising sense of right and wrong, in an enthusiastic power of moral approbation or disapprobation.

And Flavia possessed all this simple rectitude of taste and principle in its highest perfection.

Now the good old Duchess dozed upon her couch after dinner, and Flavia sat by her side with her embroidering frame before her; and Lord George planted himself upon a footstool at her feet, talking to her in a low voice, and sighing, and throwing an air of dismal melancholy into his face, which was partly the result of feeling, partly of design.

"Ah! Flavia, how insensible you are? How that needle goes in and out,—in and out. You never once look at me; I could tear that cockatoo to pieces; you did not use to be so ill-natured. I said something in the Park that made you angry, —I see I did;—I had not the least conception, upon my word, when I came down to dinner, that you could look so constrainedly, so unkindly at

me; you know I dote upon the very ground you tread on; that I love you more than the love of all brothers, cousins, friends put together; and yet you torment me in this unaccountable manner."

She raised her fair young head from the frame over which she leant, shook back her flowing silken curls, fixed her eyes,—pure and clear as those of an infant—seriously, upon his face, and said,—

"I do not like the way you talk to me, Lord George; and I think if my grandmother heard you, she would say I was right."

"And what, my sweetest little girl?" said he more gravely than usual, for he was struck, as for the first time, with the serious expression of her face. "And what, my sweetest little girl?" endeavouring to take her hand, but she kept it at her work,—"What do I say? what can I say? that my grandmother would not approve? You do me wrong, Flavia, or you mistake me altogether. I never said, knowingly, to you, that

thing which could displease an angel;—what can you be thinking of?" and he laughed a little, as she thought, saucily.

She did not blush,—she would not blush,—but again she found herself embarrassed to express her meaning.

"I am sure," continued he, "I would rather die,—and I should deserve to die, if I gave you cause to be offended at anything I said; who can have put such nonsense into your head?" and he laughed again.

She was silent.—It was plain he would not understand her meaning. She could not openly accuse him of that which she felt to be the truth: that he assumed a tone only justifiable in a lover, declared and accepted; and that she had a suspicion that he did this by design, in order to involve her in terms of intimacy, which she might find it impossible to break from. And she was quite right in this suspicion. He did act partly through calculation, though the affection he professed was most sin-

cere, and he sincerely delighted in talking to her of it.

The effect, however, he produced by this behaviour was the reverse of what he intended. He teased, frightened, perplexed, and offended her. She was teased by his declaration of partiality,—offended by the presumption with which he assumed, as a matter of course, that it was to be returned,—frightened, for she felt all was going on wrong,—perplexed, for she felt that she ought, and did not know how to set it right. And all her comfort was with Harry, Caroline, and Albert. Their simplicity, good faith, and good sense, formed the element in which she seemed to breathe freely, and which the tormenting ways of Lord George only made her sigh for the more.

END OF VOL. I.

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